

LETTERS
ON THE
IRISH NATION:

WRITTEN DURING A VISIT TO THAT
KINGDOM, IN THE AUTUMN OF
THE YEAR 1799.

By GEORGE COOPER, Esq.

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LETTERS

ON THE

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WRITTEN DURING A VISIT TO THAT

TO THE NATION

THE NATION

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BY GEORGE COOPER



FOR THE NATION

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INTRODUCTION.

IT has often been to me a subject of some surprise, when I have heard Irish affairs so much the topic both of public and private discussion as they have been of late, that the country itself should have been so little visited by travellers from Great Britain. The most remote corners of the Hebrides have been often explored, and the characters of our Northern neighbours an hundred times laid open to English curiosity. But though the name of Ireland is most familiar to our ears, yet both the kingdom and its inhabitants have been as little described as if the Atlantic had flowed between us, instead of dividing them from the new world. The observation is somewhere in Swift, that few travellers think it worth

worth their while to visit Ireland. What was true in his time, has continued so to the present period. It seems to have been blotted out of the geographical outline of European tours. I do not consider those who have been led by the calls of interest or of honour, as forming any just objection to the truth of a general remark. Gentlemen of that description are included, by Sterne, within the class of travellers from necessity. Their objects are business, or military duty : and if ever they travel out of the record, it is entirely for their own pleasure ; the republic of letters is never in the least benefited by it. There has not been a Rennel in Ireland. Setting aside them altogether, this description of travellers, who, to confess the truth, have been hitherto by far too numerous for the advantage either of Great Britain or of Ireland ; I think it will be conceded to me, that if we look over the list of tourists who have favoured the world with that knowledge of other countries, which the indefatigable spirit of British inquiry has led them to

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collect,

collect, we shall be at a loss to discover why the sister kingdom has been so strangely overlooked.

When I considered this circumstance, and at the same time felt a full conviction of the extreme interest which every subject of Great Britain must feel at the present moment for whatever relates to Ireland; I thought I could not better spend that season of recreation which the Autumn afforded me as a member of a learned profession—

———— cum jam non miscet jurgia leges,
Et pacem piger annus habet, messisque reversæ
Dimisere Forum,—

than in paying a visit to the undeservedly neglected Hibernia. I thought it a laudable curiosity to enquire a little into a nation, with which Great Britain was about to become most closely united. An Englishman's heart should not, even in war time, be cut off, like his native island, from the rest of the world. I determined therefore to set at nought the dangers of privateers, and the still greater terrors of a
stormy

stormy sea. There is a certain debt which every man owes to his country, as well as to his profession. I had often thought that a lawyer is too apt to consider himself as altogether *functus officio*, when he has paid his annual tribute of attention to the calls of his profession. His summer vacation, which might be profitably employed, is too frequently devoted to mere indolence, '*conchas et umbilicos ad Cajetam legere.*' If he joins in the dissipation of a public watering place, it is still less excusable. I determined to avoid both. I formed the resolution of dedicating a few leisure weeks to a personal examination into the state and condition of the Irish nation. The result of the observations and reflections which I made, when I was there, I now present to the Public in the following pages.

It must certainly be allowed, that nothing is more interesting, useful and honourable, than the study of the government, the religion, the commerce, and the manners of a great nation. They form a large portion of the whole circle of human science.

science. To understand them thoroughly, is only within the scope of such talents as must be combined to form both the statesman and the metaphysician. Though I directed my attention to these subjects whilst I was in Ireland, yet I cannot aspire to be considered as more than a superficial observer. I acknowledge that the country presents other interesting objects to a visitor. It abounds with the greatest variety of natural curiosities, and with that most enchanting rural scenery, which the admirers of picturesque beauty go in search of. It would well exercise the pencil either of Pouffin or Salvator Rosa. But I could not persuade myself to fill my letters with descriptions of that sort. ‘*Non hoc ista sibi tempus spectacula poscit.*’ There were other objects which more engaged my attention, and interested my inquiries. The state of the Irish kingdom had been the great subject of public discussion, ever since its Legislative Union with Great Britain was proposed. The principal arguments in favour of that measure were drawn from
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that topic. It was the Union *therefore* which attracted my attention to Irish affairs; which principally induced me to visit the country, and which afterwards bounded the nature of my inquiries when I was in it. Every fact which could tend to make up my opinion on that great contested measure, was an object to which my observations were principally directed.

I cannot pretend to assert, that every thing which I have said in the following Letters is altogether new, or that many of the observations have not even been made by other writers. I can only take to myself the merit of having ascended to the fountain head of information. Having made my remarks on the spot, and from a personal observation of facts, I may be considered as more peculiarly speaking, '*Ex Tripode Phæbi,*' than other writers on the subject. All that has been said in England must have necessarily partaken in a great degree of the nature of abstract reasoning. What I have written is rather historically descriptive. But it would be
absurd,

absurd, under every advantage, to aim at perfect originality, considering the very extensive discussion of Irish affairs which the Union has led to. I cannot, however, conscientiously accuse myself of the least plagiarism. In studying a subject it is sometimes difficult to distinguish one's own thoughts from those which originally belonged to other people. Where it can be done, no personal vanity should ever be suffered to interfere with the discharge of that important duty. But as I have been in a situation to see and not to read, to furnish my mind with the images of things, with original pictures, and not with mere copies or the representations of other men's ideas; I flatter myself that I do not stand exposed even to any suspicions of that sort.

I have, however, always made it an object with myself, to bring my mind to a right understanding on certain leading principles of politics. What these are, and from whence derived, will be hereafter explained. The blaze of the French Revolution indeed threw me, with many others,
for

for some time into confusion. Every thing which was bottomed in antiquity seemed by that splendid event (for it was splendid in its commencement) torn up by the roots. But I have long recovered myself from that shock. I have once more recognized the principles of the old school. Through the medium of these principles, I made my observations on the Irish government. It was however impossible for any man, even without a guide, to prevent false impressions; to have mistaken his way in that country. The practical merits of the government might be there read in so unequivocal a language, that it was impossible to form an erroneous appreciation of them. The same optics, however, through which I did view Ireland and its government, I often contemplate the British nation—*Populus sapiens et intelligens*, GENS MAGNA. The more I survey it, the more I am delighted with the contrast. The more I reflect on my country, the more I am convinced of the truth of Montesquieu's observation—*Que c'est le peuple du monde qui*
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*‘ a le mieux su se prévaloir à la fois de ces
trois grandes choses, la Religion, le Commerce,
et la Liberté *.’*

I did not however undertake the task of visiting Ireland, for the sake of discovering abuses in its government, to inveigh against. My object was to find topics for admiration in the pursuit of truth. My mind was neither biased by national nor party prejudices. My political principles had neither been borrowed from the monasteries under the House of Stuart, nor fabricated in the workshops of French democracy. I felt myself a friend to good government wherever it was to be found, and I looked on the British constitution as of the essence of it. But as to oppression and anarchy, whether it were in France or in Ireland, I beheld them both with equal regret and indignation.

On the subject of the religious differences of the Irish, I have carefully guarded against making any observations which might be thought foreign to the subject. I have always espoused the cause of the party

* De l'Esprit des Loix, l. 20. c. 1.

which I thought oppressed, without being attached either to the Catholic or to the Presbyterian persuasion. If the cause of religion has ever suffered in the eyes of mankind, it has been owing to mistaken and foolish zealots. I am sure I am not a member of that corps. I have discussed the interests of the Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, in a political point of view, and not as a polemic divine. I have always endeavoured to reconcile, in my own mind, an high respect for the cause of religion, with an absolute indifference as to its particular controverted doctrines. These, from their very nature, must always remain subjects of doubt and uncertainty. But I had not any thing to do either with the one or the other, in the following inquiry; and I therefore passed them by. If I have thought proper to mention them here, it was only lest I should be mistaken for a superstitious missionary, who has written a whole volume in order to advocate the cause of his own conventicle in one chapter of it.

I have also said as little as possible on
that

that grand common place for declamation, the progress of French principles all over Europe. I have left that subject to those who do not despair of rivalling Pitt in precision, or Burke in eloquence. That wonderful event, the French Revolution, as it has been felt, and still continues to be so, in the most opposite quarters of the globe, so has it called forth into action the greatest and most opposite talents. As Great Britain and Ireland have severely felt the shock of it, so have they been zealous in discussing the causes of it. As it was touching 'a nerve of exquisite sensibility, the sensation of which vibrated to the heart of Europe*;' so was it most especially felt in England, where grand swelling sentiments of liberty have always been particularly listened to. I am sure it would be hypocrisy in me to deny how often I have been affected when I have met with the lofty glowing maxims of republicanism in the poets and orators of antiquity. I have felt all that glorying and inward triumph at sub-

* Gibbon's Observation on the Crusades.

lime passages of this sort, which every reader must have experienced upon such occasions. I hope I shall long continue to enjoy that pleasure. Is it therefore to be wondered at, that the heart should have been stimulated to take an active part in their favour, when they passed from the closet to the senate? Is it strange that the abhorrence which we so early have imbibed against ancient tyranny, and which the deliberations of our more mature age must lead to confirm in us when we survey our own glorious constitution, should have led men to rejoice at the French Revolution? at the political emancipation of thirty millions of men? But whatever were our raptures at the commencement of that event, the excesses which it has led to, have startled the most anxious friends of liberty. They have been obliged to pause, to reflect, and to discriminate.

This inward conflict has terminated in an endeavour to distinguish between sober, virtuous, and rational freedom; and that false lawless species of it which is in fact
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the worst of all tyrannies. It has also taught us the important lesson of discriminating between the real friends of liberty, and those who only use it as a cloak to cover other designs—‘*Falso libertatis vocabulum offendi ab iis, qui privatim degeneres, in publicum exitiosi, nihil spei nisi per discordias habent.*’ The British nation will now acknowledge no other freedom than that which consists in personal security, personal liberty, and the protection of private property;—that freedom which the law defines, creates and supports.

With respect to the Irish rebellion, I endeavoured faithfully to get at the causes of it, both from my own individual inquiry, and from an examination of public documents. It was not my design to delineate the consequences, or to enter into any detail of the particular facts which arose out of that event. During my stay in Ireland, I had indeed ample materials for such an undertaking. But I thought that to trumpet them forth would come with a bad grace on the eve of an Union. I have
 a 3 always

always thought, and am still persuaded, that civil differences, like family ones, should be buried in oblivion. I think it is Quintilian who tells the story of a certain philosopher offering to teach Themistocles the art of memory, to such an extent that he should be perfectly able at all times to recollect whatever took place within the sphere of his observation. The illustrious Theban however made answer, that it would be doing him a much greater favour to teach him *to forget rather than remember whatever be pleased!*—Let the gazetteer historians of Ireland take the hint. I hope that the design which was advertised in Dublin, whilst I was there, of blazoning out the details of that unhappy event, the rebellion, will be given up. When the interests of both parties are on the eve of adjustment, and I trust of reconciliation, particular past differences should receive a general amnesty. This seems to be the proper and natural death of civil dissensions.

Before I close these preliminary observations,

tions, I would fain make my peace with any gentleman who may be displeased with any thing which I have said of the people of Ireland in the following Letters. I have never been in the least personal, and general characteristics have always been allowed fair game for satire. But I must not be thought to assert a right, merely because I have exercised it. I have never painted defects in hideous colours, or with the exaggeration of caricature; but merely as truth and impartial justice obliged me to do. I did not however find much occasion for censure of any sort. I look upon the people of Ireland as a brave and generous people. Their hospitality is conspicuous. In their deportment towards strangers, they are perfectly free and unreserved. There is a spirit of frankness and an engaging sprightliness in their general demeanour which cannot fail to make impressions in their favour. I would not be thought to have made an ill use of the opportunities which I enjoyed of gaining all the information I could desire. They are a people I esteem,

and

and I should be sorry to deserve the ill opinion of any individual amongst them.

I am confident that it is an undertaking of some difficulty, as well as delicacy, to inquire into the causes of public grievances and discontents. If a man happens to discover the real evil, he incurs the danger of being looked upon as the instrument of faction: if he fails in his researches, he is despised as a superficial and visionary libeller. If he approves of the conduct of government, he will be looked upon as its tool: if he condemns it, though he thereby furnishes out that sort of repast which is always swallowed most greedily by the multitude; yet may that line of conduct as often be justly imputed to spleen or disappointment, as it deserves to be considered the language of impartial truth. Malignity is as much false liberty, as flattery is the crime of foul slavery: ‘*Adulationi fœdum crimen servitutis, malignitati falsa species libertatis inest.*’ As I disclaim both, I hope I shall not be suspected of either. Every man may step a little out of his ordinary sphere,

when the affairs of a nation are distracted. It did not perhaps even require anticipation to look upon the affairs of Ireland as those of Great Britain, to examine into them narrowly, and to reason upon them freely, boldly and liberally.

With respect to the execution of this work, as it professes to be only an epistolary one, I hope that much apology is not required for it. Many graces of arrangement and diction have been sacrificed, to accommodate the time of publication to the political topic of the day. I have however been, to myself, a most severe critic*.

Whilst I have been revising these Letters for the Press, I have an hundred times resolved to abandon altogether the design of publishing them. I have even proceeded to tear my papers. But my courage at length has conquered my irresolution. But yet, after all, I should never have aspired beyond the obscurity of an anonymous writer, if I had thought that my name would be

* *Soyez vous a vous meme un severe critique.*

BOILEAU.

pledged

pledged either for argument or style, and not merely for that regard to impartial truth and justice with which the Letters were written.

I conclude this long Preface with hoping that I shall not be thought to have been altogether travelling out of my profession. I should be sorry to be classed with the mere pamphleteers of the day, because I have assumed that character to fill up a few leisure hours. I have always been used to active pursuits, and had rather employ myself even about trifles, than drag out the time in unprofitable indolence—‘*Is demum mihi vivere et frui anima videtur, qui aliquo negotio intentus.*’ I trust, however, that the task I have ventured upon, will neither be considered trifling, nor uninteresting at the present period of time. I even hope that the importance of it will alone suffice to excuse the defective execution of it. To be instrumental in restoring order and repose to a kingdom, so greatly distracted as Ireland has long been—to aim at promoting a good understanding between that nation and
and

and Great Britain, in order that every thing should be sweetly and harmoniously disposed through both islands towards the conservation of their common liberties, commerce and dominion—is merely, in the attempt, an undertaking that would ennoble the highest flights of genius, and obtain pardon for the efforts of the meanest understanding. That object I have constantly had in view. But, had I done justice to the attempt, even if I had been able, (which I am sure nobody is farther from supposing than I am,) I should have been carried far beyond those bounds which I had prescribed to myself. The torrent would have carried me away from all my professional avocations, instead of merely filling up a chasm in them. The more I thought of my subject, the more I found the difficulties of it increase. I may truly say, that, like a tired traveller, I found ‘Alps on Alps arise,’ without the consolation of any visible limit or boundary. I was forced to pause, and leave it unfinished. I have therefore done little more than the

merely sketching an outline, which I have filled up with equal haste and imperfection. I am even conscious that however dissatisfied I may now be with what I have done, yet the more I shall hereafter think on it, the more will that dissatisfaction continue to increase. Such however as it is, I throw it as my mite into the rich bank of British Literature. I send it to its account with all its imperfections on its head. Whatever may be its fate, the author is sure to satisfy every liberal critic, by acknowledging the defects of his work, and confessing himself, in the words of the greatest poet that ever wrote,

NHIIION, ουπω ειδοθ' ομοιου πολεμοιο,

Ουδ' αγορων, ινα τ' ανδρες αριπρεπεις τελεθουσι.

London,
Nov. 1, 1799. }

Letters on the Irish Nation.

LETTER I.

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE IRISH.

MY DEAR SIR,

WHEN I last addressed you, I was prosecuting my journey through North Wales. I was studiously exploring the retreats and fastnesses to which our gallant ancestors retired in defence of their last liberties. I felt happy in the midst of a brave and honest people. They have long enjoyed the high character of combining individual integrity with public loyalty and attachment to England. There is no country where I could possibly have felt myself more at home. The Englishman who travels through it, will find the system of manners and the habits of life which
B prevail

prevail there, only so far differing from his own, as to furnish a pleasing variety to instruct and recreate the mind. He may there travel over classic ground without going far abroad for it, and find sufficient objects to enrich his imagination, improve his taste, and meliorate his heart.

I have now arrived in Ireland. With the spirit of curiosity raised to its highest pitch, having climbed the shaggy steep of old Snowdon, and wound back my way through the mazes, defiles and passes, which abound in the romantic country of the Ancient Britons; I left the royal towers of Caernarvon, the birth-place of the unfortunate Edward; crossed the famous strait which Tacitus has immortalized; and travelled across the island which was the last sanctuary of Druidical superstition, and the boundary of Roman conquest. At the opposite extremity of Anglesea I embarked for Dublin, to which the favourable winds blew me safely over in twelve hours.

It will be the object of this letter to describe the contrast of character which I
have

have met with in the sister kingdom. In my future letters I shall descend to other important particulars. But, in discharging this task, I must declare that it will neither be my inclination or duty to apologize for any seeming prolixities. You have requested my observations on the Irish nation, and I shall give them to you in such order, at such length, and moreover at such times as my single judgment shall dictate. The government, the religion, the morals, and the manners of a country, are the objects which attract a traveller's attention. In studying these, he will always find his best account. But the connection of Ireland with Great Britain may extend the enquiry to the physical peculiarities of the country. The climate, the soil, and the natural beauties will perhaps excite your curiosity; I shall, therefore, dispatch that subject in a very few words.

The difference of a single degree of latitude cannot, of itself, make the climate of Ireland differ much from that of England. But the bogs and morasses, which constitute

the peculiar characteristic of the country, occasion an extraordinary moisture and dampness of the atmosphere. Ireland may be justly called, in the words of Tacitus, '*terra paludibus fœda.*' I may even carry on the parallel with the description which that admired writer continues to give of ancient Germany. Its lands are almost entirely pasturage, and of course afford sustenance to prodigious flocks and herds. The perennial greenness of the country is therefore justly proverbial. But in the article of timber, there is an uncommon deficiency. I have heard it estimated, and I think with some appearance of truth, that there is as much wood in our single county of Kent, as in the whole kingdom of Ireland. When I add to these physical peculiarities, that the bays and harbours of Ireland are uncommonly picturesque, as well as commodious; that the Shannon is a most noble river; that the lakes of Killarney are the most enchanting in the world; and that Dublin, in population, magnitude, and the splendour of its public edifices,

edifices, is the second city in his Majesty's dominions; you know all that is necessary to learn, or perhaps that is worth knowing, of the general appearance of the country.

Leaving, therefore, the detailed description of these particulars to those whose dispositions or leisure it may suit with to make them, I proceed to the more important task of enquiring into the character of the Irish people. I am sensible, however, that a discussion of this sort is attended with great difficulties. I trust you will, therefore, give me credit for entering upon it with becoming diffidence. He who flatters himself that the character either of an individual, or of a nation, may afford an uniformity of virtuous and honourable qualities, without the alloy of any faults or defects, will find himself in the result greatly disappointed. To such a man therefore I do not address myself. 'The web of our life (as Shakespeare somewhere remarks) is of mingled yarn, good and ill together. Our virtues would be too proud, if they were not counterbalanced by

our vices; and our vices would be intolerable, if they were not chastised by our virtues.'

The characters, then, both of individuals and of nations, are alike chequered with beauties and deformities, with virtues and with vices. If we enquire into the causes from which these peculiarities flow, we shall find that it necessarily must be so. The infirmity of human nature is a plea broad enough to cover the greatest defects. But philosophers, when enquiring into the causes of national characters, have pushed their researches still farther. Though the most accomplished politicians, both of ancient and modern times, have been divided in opinion with respect to these causes; yet they all agree that the effects are necessary, invariable, and unalterable. Physical causes and moral ones have been alternately cried up. Mankind stood long contented with the authorities of Aristotle and Montesquieu, who laid great stress upon the former; but that opinion has been at length arraigned by the cool scepticism of Hume. He doubts altogether of the influence

fluence of physical causes *. It is far from my intention to declare myself the advocate of either party, or to decide dogmatically on their respective merits. I should be happy were I able to reconcile them. It is a misfortune to mankind, when the great oracles of human wisdom contradict each other. Perhaps, however, in this case, as in most others, truth will be found in the medium, equally apart from both the extremes.

The physical qualities of climate, air, and food, may certainly produce some effects on the national character; but I am inclined to consider them as very inconsiderable. By working insensibly on the tone and habit of the body, these peculiarities may perhaps influence in a small degree the temper and the passions. But whoever considers that the most opposite

* This difference in the opinions of these great men, may be seen by referring to Aristotle's *Politics*, b. 4; Montesquieu de l'*Esprit des Loix*, l. 14. (He copied Aristotle without quoting him.) Lastly, Hume, in his *Essay on National Characters*, who violently attacks both, without mentioning the name of either.

and inconsistent characters are often to be found under the same climate, and that, on the other hand, an uniformity of disposition and manners is sometimes seen in the most opposite extremes of heat and cold, will, I trust, be inclined to ascribe little effect to physical causes in producing national characters.—It is, then, to moral causes, that we must principally resort, in accounting for the manners of a nation. These are: the nature of the government; the revolutions of public affairs; the religion, the laws, the plenty or penury in which the people live; the situation of the country with respect to its neighbours; and such like particulars. These are the circumstances which move the thoughts and the passions of men. Hence their sentiments and their habits are formed; and from hence their actions proceed. It is, therefore, from these sources that the general spirit of every civilized nation must principally take its rise.

In order to give you a distinct idea of this national character in the sister kingdom, it
will

will be necessary to apprize you of a distinction of ranks unknown in England. It is not merely that strong line of demarcation which in all countries divides the rich from the poor: it is something more. The emigrations from Great Britain to Ireland have produced two classes of people in it, the colonists with their descendants, and the native Irish, the original inhabitants of the country. To the first of these ranks is confined all the civil power of the state, both supreme and subordinate; all the property in it both landed and commercial; and all the education and refinement. It is not necessary that I should point out to you, how much the other class of the people must be separated from this first, when deprived of all these advantages. But the government, the established religion, and the laws have added weight and force to this already formidable barrier. Reserving the general discussion of these particulars to a future opportunity, I shall content myself with remarking, that, notwithstanding these distinctions between the Irish people, there are

certain features of national character in which they resemble each other. I shall, therefore, endeavour, first to point out this coincidence; and then, by observations on each class separately, inform you of the particulars in which they differ.

Almost all philosophers have concurred in allowing to the passions a certain share in forming the human character, though some of them have denied their controul over a truly virtuous man. The severity of the Stoics, indeed, led them to declare, and even to define all passion as contrary to nature; and the splendid eloquence of Cicero has been exerted in giving weight to that opinion *. But the progress of truth has at last fully shewn that these sublimated notions are inconsistent with the frailty of man. Aristotle (who opposed Plato in this as in all his other opinions) paved the way to a more mild and moderate system of philosophy. When the doctrines of the Peripatetic School had

* See the fourth Tusculan Disputation of Cicero, chap. vi. and seq.

been

been long almost forgotten, a philosopher and historian was born in the bleak and frozen regions of the North, who has undeservedly acquired the merit of originality in establishing the opinions of the Stagyrite *. Whilst the unlearned Sophisters of the day thought that Hume was attacking them, they were unconscious that he was only wielding the weapons of Aristotle. By this system, whose basis is nature, and whose superstructure the most unanswerable reasoning, virtue is proved to be nothing more than the discipline of our natural feelings and affections into steady habits of right conduct. It does not consist in the extinction of the passions, but in the regulation of them. Virtue is grafted on the stock of the natural affections: Reason, which is the presiding deity, is exalted over the heart, to govern by its dictates ‘ the little state of man.’

Perhaps it will be found, that all national characters differ in proportion to the de-

* See Hume's Principles of Morals.

degrees in which these two principles of reason and passion are found to preponderate. They constitute all the intermediate gradations between the civilized state and the inhabitants of New Zealand. They form even the extremes themselves. It is for this reason that the philosophers of all ages and in all countries are the same characters. Both principles, properly blended, constitute the most refined and exalted characters, because both are interwoven in man by the hand of nature.

I think that I cannot give you a better general idea of the Irish character than by resorting to this system of metaphysics. It seems to me that the principle of passion bears a more than equal sway over that of reason, with this people. They are endued with warm hearts, strong feelings, and that peculiar force of natural sentiment which I consider as capable of being exalted, by the wisdom of legislation, into a most amiable national character. But that which ought only to enliven and empassion the understanding, is left to vegetate unpruned
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in all the wanton exuberance of nature. It is not sufficiently under the controul and discipline of reason and moral habit. The consequence is, that it leads to many faults, at the same time that it constitutes many virtues in their characters. I shall point out to you how this haughty principle displays itself in the Irish nation.

I. 1. This is first in an high conceit of the political rank of their country in the list of nations, and of each individual of it as an important member of society. It cannot be dissembled that they are a vain-glorious and a boasting nation. The popular vanity of the whole can only be equalled by the family pride of each individual. They are equally ridiculous in their genealogical calculations, and their hyperbolical encomiums on their country. Their historians have traced up the pedigree of their country to a period much earlier than the chronological records of civilized society extend. They will allow, that the '*vixere fortes ante Agamemnona*' of Horace, is at least true as applied to Ireland.

They

They inform you, that it was flourishing in learning and civilization, whilst all other nations were obscured in ignorance and barbarism. Europe and America are contented to acknowledge their gratitude to Phœnicia, for bestowing on them the benefits of letters and religion. But the Irish historians, forming a solitary exception to this general acquiescence of modern nations, have inverted the ordinary progress of civilization, by asserting that their country was in the enjoyment of it prior to the Assyrian or oldest of the four monarchies of the ancient world. They assert that Egypt and Phœnicia received the arts and sciences from the great ancestor of the Irish nation. This people, so polished in the remotest periods of antiquity, may therefore consistently lay claim to the honour of being the *fathers of letters* *. The beauty and fertility of their country are equally the objects of their commendation. They will tell you that whatever is celebrated for beauty in history or fable, is but a faint

* See O'Halloran's History.

picture of what is to be seen in Ireland. I have found amongst them more Rudbecks than the university of Upsal ever produced*. As that celebrated professor assured the Swedes in his work called the *Manheim* or *Atlantica*, that the Atlantis of Plato, the country of the Hyperboreans, the gardens of the Hesperides, the Fortunate Islands, and even the Elysian Fields, were all but imperfect transcripts of the delightful region of Sweden; so are the Irish equally lavish in their encomiums on Ireland. It was but the other day that I accidentally fell into company with a professor of their university of Dublin, and the conversation turning on the respective merits of Great Britain and Ireland in the above-mentioned particulars, I found it impossible to convince him that London was a finer city than Dublin, or that England in fertility and cultivation could at all be compared with Ireland. I left him to the peaceable enjoyment of his own opinion.

* Some account of Rudbeck may be found in Gibbon's History, chap. ix.

Something has been said of the pride of pedigree displayed here by individuals. The Irishman in this respect far exceeds all other nations. He can point out the individual son of Japhet from whose loins he is lineally descended. In the reign of Edward the Second, as I remember to have somewhere read, an Ulster prince boasted to the pope of one hundred and ninety-seven kings of Ireland to the year 1170. The genealogical tree of the meanest individual has an equally deep root. In the same spirit, and with a similar boast of ancestry, a kitchen-wench in the service of the celebrated bishop of Cloyne refused to carry out cinders, because she was descended from an old Irish stock *. I might weary you with details of this sort, but I content myself with assuring you that there is no nation whose legendary tales about their country and kindred are so extravagant and ridiculous as those of the Irish. The English have been laughed at by foreigners, for

* See his work entitled 'A Word to the Wise,' p. 131. subjoined to the Querist.

their

their predilection in favour of their own country. But an Englishman's vanity proceeds from a conviction of the acknowledged superiority in constitution, commerce, and the enjoyment of the comforts of life, which his country enjoys over all the world. The utmost paroxysms of his pride on these accounts, are sobriety and moderation themselves, when compared with the Irishman's. I do not, however, mention this leading trait in the character of the Irish nation, as an unpardonable folly. On the contrary, I acknowledge it to be an harmless and innocent prejudice. I am not ignorant that there is an habitual native dignity inspired by the idea of a liberal descent, which is better adapted to the prevention of crime, and the preservation of a rational and manly virtue, than any other principle that I know of.

2. But I turn with pleasure from the laughable excesses to which this trait of Irish character leads, to one that I could expatiate upon with pleasure as a scholar, and with gratitude as an English subject.

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I mean

I mean that heroic courage, that most splendid of all virtues, which has long adorned the people of this country. It does not proceed either from any principle of self-love, or sense of duty, which they have; but from that pride, that love of distinction, and that warmth of temper which so much distinguishes them. All the world must agree, that the Irish are a brave and warlike people, '*gens insuperabile bello.*' They may be slaughtered or dispersed in the field of battle, but their spirit can never be tamed. Their minds are capable of being wound up to the highest pitch of fortitude; and their bodies are hardy, robust, and equal to the greatest fatigue. But their courage is certainly not that just medium between rashness and pusillanimity, which a philosopher would admire. It is too much influenced by passion, and too little by the cool dictates of reason and reflection. For true fortitude can only be seen in exploits which are warranted by justice, and guided by the dictates of wisdom. But this is not the character

character of Irish courage : it is more of 'towering phrensy and distraction.' The consequence is, that it has only been found serviceable when made subordinate to order and strict discipline. It is of itself totally unfit to resolve before it executes. For this reason, the Irish have always distinguished themselves for bravery in the subordinate stations in our fleets and armies, but seldom when possessed of supreme power. They have always succeeded to admiration where mere boldness has been looked for. They are gifted with that enterprizing character which disregards all obstacles, or only considers them as so many incentives to exertion.

A characteristic naturally connected with this philosophical defect in the bravery of the Irish, is, that they are hasty and impetuous, rash and choleric, and subject to the most violent attacks of anger and passion. This irascible temper naturally makes the English cautious of indulging too great a degree of intimacy with them. When heated with wine, of which they are immoderate-

ly fond, there is no description of people so quarrelsome or dangerous. Drinking, instead of promoting harmony, and conviviality, too frequently leads them to broils and encounters. Even the merry-making of the peasant generally ends in bloodshed. But this is in some degree to be attributed to that generous warmth and openness of temper, to that boldness both in speech and action, which when heightened by the juice of the grape, pours out the sentiments of the heart in the most unguarded manner. The great Bacon has an observation applicable to this subject: 'Wine (says he) is of a common nature with all the passions, and it will be found to kindle and excite each of them in an equal degree.' When these principles, therefore, co-operate in an Irishman, the result must necessarily be such as I have described it.

3. The same disposition which displays itself in the manner I have above related, shews itself also amongst the Irish in another amiable point of view. This is in a spirit of liberality and generosity, which
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I have seldom seen equalled. The hospitality and munificence which they display towards strangers, is, I think, unrivalled in any European country. That reserve towards strangers, which alike characterises the Englishman and his mastiff, is unknown in Ireland. An accidental rencontre on the public road, often leads to the utmost hospitality: I have myself more than once experienced the benefit of this quality, under circumstances of that nature. The liberality displayed towards their guests at their tables is indeed so extreme, as to be frequently prejudicial to their fortunes. But it is obvious that there is a degree of ostentatious vanity which has some share in leading them to these excesses: and their quickness in forming friendships is attended with that general consequence which accompanies this disposition, a proportionate shortness in the duration of their attachments.

4. But there is a trait in their dispositions and manners somewhat connected with this

hospitality, and which often serves as a foil to it. This is an excessive love of gaming, no where indulged to greater lengths than in Ireland. This spirit for play is not confined to the higher classes of individuals as in England, but extends to the poorest and meanest of the people. The effect which it produces on their conduct, conversation and behaviour in social life, has been to me a matter of inconceivable amazement. I happened to be in Dublin when the State Lottery was drawing, and if I wanted convincing how pernicious an expedient this is for raising money for the use of the government, I should have there met with it. The crowds which are drawn in this vortex are inconceivable; old and young, rich and poor, gentleman and beggar, are alike avowed candidates for the favours of the blind goddess. In England, the laws guard against many of the evils which this invention has been found to produce: the refinement of manners is still an additional guard against them. But
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in Ireland these laws do not exist; and manners form no barrier to supply the want of them. I have heard gentlemen in the most fashionable circles of polite company, openly exult at their gains, even by the insurance of lottery-tickets. Indeed speculations of that nature cannot anywhere else be carried on to such an extent.

But the effects of this gaming expedient for raising money, are still more conspicuous amongst the lower classes of the people. The public streets of Dublin are filled with lottery-offices, beyond the conception even of a Londoner. These shops are adorned with every thing which can catch the eye, and delude the mind of the unwary. They are furnished with the most gaudy trappings; are generally papered with green and gold, and lighted up with a profusion of the most expensive cut-glass chandeliers and girandoles, which throw the streets at night into a blaze, and glitter with a brilliancy which cannot fail of surprizing a stranger. In these shops are crowds of the most miserable ragged objects (of which

Dublin perhaps contains more than any other city in Europe), staking their daily bread on the chance of gain. I have often observed in London the multitudes of poor people, who are cajoled by the harpies who keep lottery-offices. I have often heard of the families of industrious mechanics and manufacturers driven by their frauds into the streets to beg their bread. I have even known old servants plundered of the 'thrifty hire saved in a life of service.' But yet these are all trifles when compared with the extent to which the evil of lottery-offices is carried on in Ireland. They are there an insult to the eye of public decency. The immense fortunes also, which I understand are often suddenly amassed by the keepers of these gaming-houses, are incredible. To my mind, this open pillage of the public, is an outrage committed on every principle of morality, of moderation, and of the spirit and object of laws.

II. These are what I consider to be the most striking traits of that character which

is common to all ranks and descriptions of people in Ireland: they constitute what may perhaps be called the general manners of the nation. You will, therefore, next expect of me, that I should discuss separately, the two classes into which I have divided the people, in order to point out the differences in their characters.

1. In these, the effect of moral causes is most conspicuously displayed. All the higher ranks of the people have emigrated from England or Scotland, and obviously carry about them those distinguishing marks which a mother country always produces on her sons, and which a vicinity of situation and constant correspondence with them must perpetually keep alive.

This distinguishes the nobility and gentry of Ireland, by a degree of civilization and refinement in their manners, unknown to the majority of the people. It produces a similitude of manners with the English nation, to the extent of the communication between the two countries. Our Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, are crowded

ed with Irish students; and our four inns of court in London, are thronged with them. This residence in the metropolis and the seats of learning in England, produces that urbanity of manners which sometimes almost melts down the Irish gentleman into an English one: at all events, it extends the influence of education, and the refinement of manners, amongst friends and relatives at home.

2. In this English school are formed the individuals who compose the Irish legislative and judicial bodies. On these two theatres, the houses of parliament and the bar, it must be allowed that many shining characters have been exhibited: and that many still continue to merit the applause and admiration of the world. As almost every gentleman in Ireland considers the education of his son incomplete without sending him to study three years in the Temple; it necessarily follows, that the members of parliament and barristers are blended together in education and character. Indeed it is known that one third of the house of commons

commons has generally been practising lawyers, or at least men who always shew themselves in the courts in readiness to become such. The observations, therefore, applicable to the talents which are displayed in the courts of justice, are perfectly applicable to those which the parliament affords the field for.

3. To the honour of Ireland, it must be acknowledged that the integrity and purity of character of those who have presided over the administration of justice in the kingdom, has always been unblemished and irreproachable. It must also be confessed that there is often much learning and still more talent to be found amongst those who fill the secondary ranks in the profession of the law. There are not many of that forensic rabble*, that mechanical order of practitioners; that half-witted, quibbling, over technical class of lawyers, 'who grovel all their lives in a mean but gainful application to the little arts of chi-

* Rabula forensis. Cro.

cane.'

cane *.' The nature of the Irish character renders it almost impossible to form the '*leguleius cautor*,' the '*acutus præco actionum*,' the '*cautor formularum*,' against all which Cicero has pointed his ridicule. On the contrary, there will be found at the Irish bar, that enlarged education which tends to form orators, philosophers, and statesmen : there will be discovered at it, men who have climbed to what Bolingbroke calls 'the vantage ground of science.' Their indiscriminate application to all the walks of the profession (so carefully avoided in England) gives them an enlarged and comprehensive knowledge. Add to this, the warmth and energy of the Irish character greatly tends to form the true orator. It gives him that empasioned style of declamation which is of the very essence of real eloquence. All high eloquence must flow from passion. There is a coldness and torpor in the English character, a dull, tame, sluggishness in the nation, which is incompatible with true oratory. We have

* Bolingbroke.

never

never produced such speakers as Flood and Curran. Perhaps they are unrivalled by the English in that florid style, of which imagination and passion form the principal ingredients. Rational, argumentative orators we have in abundance. Our senate and courts are crowded with lawyers and statesmen of solid learning and real genius, who avoid that empty declamation, that 'bald unjointed chat,' and verbose counterfeited appearance of knowledge *, which so often must characterize the Irish orator. We have often produced a Coke and a Blackstone, but never a Cicero or an Hortensius. Our English lawyers too will be often found to have inherited much of the subtilty, and even the chicanery which characterized their Norman ancestors. It is true, that with all these drawbacks we often hear oratory in England in which every thing that learning can afford is adorned by the splendid trappings and embellishments of rhetoric. But

* Verbosa simulatio prudentiæ. Cic.

this

this will generally be found to be exotic talent. It is seldom of English growth. It has either come from Ireland, or from the bleak mountains of Caledonia. Murray was a Scot; and Burke was of the sister kingdom.

4. To return from the appreciation of talent to the consideration of manners; there is a striking peculiarity in the Irish character which it is almost impossible that you should have overlooked: I mean that romantic gallantry towards the fair sex, that chivalrous spirit, which so highly distinguishes and marks the Irish nation. The warmth of their tempers will partly account for it. Their obligations to the feudal system, and its attendant chivalry, which has contributed so much towards the refinement of modern manners, will account for the rest. In this point of view, indeed, the eloquent encomiums of Burke are peculiarly just and applicable. He knew full well that the empassioned character of his countrymen had been materially softened and adorned by the influence

fluence of this benign principle. It has made them men of the nicest honour, and lovers of the most engaging kind. The company of the fair-sex has been formed by the influence which chivalry has left behind it, into the grand school for all the mild and the amiable virtues. It has been made the source of all politeness, gentleness of manners, purity, patience and observance.

5. The antient world were strangers to this romantic kind of attachment to women; but it must also be remembered, that they were strangers to those laws of honour which chivalry has left behind. Against these laws moralists cannot too much declaim, or legislators too carefully guard. In proportion to the influence which they obtain, it has been invariably found that all other laws and regulations are weakened and undermined. In France, where this principle was carried to its highest pitch, it is well known that the most wanton attacks on private happiness were considered as no reproach to a gentleman.

Seduction

Seduction and adultery were carried on in the spirit of knight-errantry, and in the most open and unreserved manner. Indeed the fair-sex always appreciated their consequence by the number of suitors in their train. Gallantry, which is but another name for chivalry, seemed to have altered even the unalterable nature of virtue itself, amongst the people of France under the old government. It created new merits, and glossed over old vices. How far the revolution in politics which has been effected will alter them in these respects, experience alone can demonstrate.

I cannot account for that slack system of morality which is so observable in Ireland, upon any other principle than the one above-mentioned. There is a profaneness, a neglect of public worship and private devotion, a cruel oppression of the tenantry, and a general want of charity towards the poor, more striking amongst the Irish gentry than any where I ever saw or heard of. Religion has done nothing towards the civilization of the Irish. To
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it they may well renounce all obligation. But though I have pictured this general state of immorality, yet there is one particular to which the charge does not apply; I allude to conjugal infidelity; instances of which are much less common than in England. The women have the character of being virtuous; I am sure I should be sorry to rob them of that brightest jewel in the female character. But the evil of chivalry, (for I am on the subject, and must proceed with it,) which has not extended to the corruption of the women, has made full amends for the deficiency by the ravages it has made, in this particular, in the characters of the men. It seems also to be an opinion universally prevailing, that the profession of a gamester is more confined to the natives of Ireland, than of any other portion of his Majesty's dominions.

The reason of this state of immorality, such as I have described it, has been well given by the archdeacon Paley. 'The laws of honour,' says he, 'only prescribe duties *towards equals*, without attending
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either

either to those which are due to the Supreme Being, or to our inferiors.'

I conclude the observations which suggest themselves to my mind on the character of the higher class of people in Ireland, with remarking, that there is not only this neglect of religion amongst them, but also a general derision of it in others. This derision mounts into persecution, where the religion professed by others happens to differ from that which is established by law. The rich have all the intolerance of bigots, without any of their piety. I think that you will agree with me, that these are sufficiently striking traits of character to distinguish the rich from the lower classes of the people in Ireland.

III. It is in general remarked, and with great truth, that the manners of a nation alter considerably from one age to another; either by revolutions in government, by the mixture of strangers amongst them, or even by that inconstancy to which all human affairs are subjected by nature. But perhaps this observation will be found to be

be exclusively inapplicable to three-fourths of the Irish nation. As the earliest records of the commencement of the connection between the two countries inform us that they then were—so will they be found at present—an illiterate and uncivilized people. I pass over their legendary tales of antient refinement, having nothing to do with a period three thousand years before Christ, which rests upon little more than oral tradition. I have observed, that the relative situation of one state with another, must, without doubt, have great influence on the manners, and even sentiments, of both nations. Civilization has gradually travelled from the S to the North; opposing itself, as it were, to the ordinary progress of conquest. Asia taught Europe, giving lessons to her first-born son, Greece; and that darling child of nature communicated its knowledge to Italy. The conquerors of the world spread civilization through Gaul, till at last it reached the most northern points of Britain. Thule, at last, has indeed had her

historians and rhetoricians. The relative situation of one state with another has thus always demonstrated its influence on the manners, and even sentiments, of its neighbour. France has certainly operated considerably, in these respects, upon England. It is said, and with truth, to have forwarded our refinement, directed our taste, and, in every sense, to have been a cradle and nursery to the nation—*gentis incunabula nostræ*.

This principle will well account for that portion of civilization which I have observed is actually found amongst the rich and powerful in Ireland. Our colonists have carried it over from the mother country, and the education of the child has followed upon that of the parent. But this refinement of manners has never crept into the great mass of the people. Other nations have advanced in all the arts of polished life by insensible degrees; but the Irish are still at a stand. The natives of that country, the descendants, as it seems probable, of its aborigines, still remain the same
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rude barbarians that our earliest accounts describe them. I shall have little difficulty in describing this character, as it may be depicted in the same few words with that of all nations who have been seen in a state of ignorance and barbarity.

1. If we study the manners of the ancient Germans, in Tacitus; or of the Tartar tribes, as described by the French missionaries and travellers; or of the modern American Indians, as they have been often seen by our colonists in the North, and circumnavigators in the South; it is impossible that we should not be struck with the resemblance they bear to each other. The cause may be traced to the plain and simple operations of nature. As the appetites of a quadruped may be more easily ascertained than the speculations of a philosopher; so the savage tribes of mankind, as they approach nearer to the condition of animals, preserve a stronger resemblance to themselves and to each other. The uniform stability of their manners is a natural consequence of the imperfection

of their faculties. Reduced to a similar situation, their wants, their desires, their enjoyments are all the same *. Perhaps it would be an happy circumstance if a certain depravity in human nature did not prevent a perfect similitude between the barbarian and the process of instinct in the animal creation. There are certain advantages which instinct must be allowed to possess, even over the refinements of civil society. The simplicity to be met with in the actions of our fellow-creatures, shews nature pure and untainted; neither disguised with art, nor clouded with passion; neither dashed with philosophy, nor corrupted with a multiplicity of contradictory opinions. The farther we go back, the more this simplicity is discernible. The vegetable world is in a manner tied down by the root to preserve an uniformity of nature, without sense or even instinct to mislead it. The animal may indeed be sometimes betrayed, by appetite or desire, into small digressions from what may be

* Gibbon.

called natural principles: but though the deviation sometimes happens, the random is never greater than that of a ship which rides at anchor. But *reason*, the great and boasted director of the human species, is always hunting after new roads; is perpetually led astray into bye-paths by the roving of fancy; and is never to be met with in the plain and beaten track of nature*.

But whilst I talk thus of the digressions of human nature, I am insensibly running into one myself: whilst I speak of the roving of others, I am myself perhaps guilty of unpardonable ones. My excuse is, that I was led away by the incomparable Plutarch, without perceiving whither he was hurrying me. But to return to my subject.

It will not require that great writer's zeal for parallelism to discover almost the same traits of character in the poor peasantry of Ireland, which distinguish every uncivilized people. The influence of na-

* See Plutarch, *De amore prolis*.

ture has not been subdued, but in many respects perpetuated, by the operation of moral causes. I shall explain this seeming paradox in my next letter. At present I content myself with observing, that, though the condition and manners of the Irish do not present us with that appearance of an associated band of warriors which the political society of the German tribes formerly gave them, and which is still seen in North America; nor with that pleasing idea of a numerous and increasing family which the Tartar tribes have always suggested to the mind of the philosopher; although they more approximate to the degraded state of a horde of Hottentots; yet I am persuaded, that in the three important articles of habitation, diet and disposition, there will be found a great resemblance. If the effects of government and religion could be suspended, the parallel would be perfect. They would, under different circumstances, present us with the picture of the shepherd and of the warrior.

2. The

2. The Irish peasant lives in a low narrow hut, called a cabin; which is built of the fligthest materials, cemented with clay, and thatched with straw. It is generally without glass to its windows, or a door to shut out the wind and rain. It seldom enjoys the convenience of a chimney, so that the smoke is seen ascending through every quarter of the roof. In this cold and comfortless habitation, the two sexes promiscuously herd together. These narrow precincts must not only afford shelter to a wife and family, but they must also inclose within them his *live stock*, if indeed the peasant rises in worldly fortune to the possession of a cow or a pig. These enjoyments of *property* are thus, like all other human advantages, tempered with a proportionate share of inconveniences. They deprive him of so much room in his cabin. The whole *family* are obliged to live under the same roof. Children and pigs may indeed, and always do, eat, drink and sleep together. But a stall must be provided for a cow, by portioning off

off part of the cabin. The peasant, though he may possess half a rood of land, cannot parcel it off for the purpose, because it would rob him so far of the source of subsistence. This naturally leads me to consider that subject.

3. The diet of the Irish peasantry is chiefly vegetables; his subsistence depending on a small spot of ground, which he generally sows with potatoes. Bread, which constitutes the ordinary and wholesome food of a civilized people, he is almost a stranger to. It can only be obtained by agriculture, which is here at its lowest ebb; the lands being, as I have before observed, almost wholly thrown into pasture for cattle. But perhaps it might therefore be reasonably expected, that the peasant would often enjoy the nourishment of animal food. But the fact is otherwise: he is almost a stranger to it. His poverty will not allow him to live upon that which is the great trading commodity of the country. If he possessed cattle, he must sell them to make up his
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heavy rents: when he is without them, where can he obtain the means of purchasing them? The consequence of this is, that the peasant starves in the midst of plenty. Whilst the beast of the field is fattened; the man is often seen famishing. And yet, notwithstanding this scarcity of animal food, and entire dependance on roots for subsistence, it must be confessed that the peasantry are naturally an healthy and robust race of men. Their limbs are well formed, and they possess great strength of body. The medical world may with reason consider these two circumstances as convincing proofs, that a vegetable diet is at least as fully congenial to nature as any other.

4. If we proceed from these external circumstances to examine the furniture of the peasant's mind, his disposition, and the qualities of his heart; we shall find him miserably destitute of fear, reason, or humanity. His poverty and oppression necessarily make him a prey to the mean and ferocious vices. He is a slave to ignorance
and

and superstition, which will be found inseparably connected together. The Roman Catholic priest is the petty tyrant of each village. But his authority does not create that religious, orderly, decent and dignified conduct which Christianity produces in England. There is nowhere to be seen that orderly observance of the Sabbath, which, to a traveller in Great Britain, bespeaks the mild influence of religion. On the contrary, the lower classes of the people are a prey to that gross irrational sort of superstition which has little tendency to enlighten the mind, to curb the passions, or to regulate the conduct. The empire of the priest is founded on the fears and the observances of his followers. It is a throne whose 'stubble pillars' are concealed by the gloomy darkness of ignorance and credulity. The ceremonies of worship are mere mechanical operations, which, like the pagan idolatry, consist of exterior practices, in which the mind has no concern. It is founded on the passions, and its effects are most visible
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in creating and keeping alive a bitter spirit of intolerance. It is a system of blind and implicit reliance on the directions of a godly father. He regulates their wants in this life, and directs their fears or hopes of the next. He sells them the absolution of their sins, or resigns them to the pit of damnation. They can entertain little dread of incurring stains which may be easily wiped away. It is faith, and not works, which seems with them to be considered as achieving the glorious reward of salvation. On the assurance of a mortal man, and that a venal one, they build their hopes of divine favour. On the worship of a few wooden images (false idols, before which they bow down), the imaginary patronage of some tutelary saint, stated fastings, prayers, together with a few other absurd rites and ceremonies, they rest their hopes of a blessed immortality.

If this system of religion could make the people more sober, devout and orderly, it would deserve the highest commendation.

dation. If it could remove that intemperate behaviour so universal, and harmonize the manners of three millions of people, the gratitude of the enlightened part of mankind would unite them in its commendation. The philosopher must approve of every religion which makes a better man. Neither the Talmud, nor the Koran, deserve reprobation, when considered in a worldly sense, and apart from truths of a more sublime and celestial nature. But the effect of the Catholic superstition on the Irish, is to plunge their minds in the darkness and gothic ignorance of the 13th century. It makes them the dupes of artful demagogues, who assume the cloak of the ecclesiastical profession. It is the character of every rude nation to be led by its priests. This religion also inflames those fierce passions which sometimes break out with the most fanatical fury in all the horrors of civil war.

5. There is but one feature more which I have to add to this degraded character, and which we shall invariably find to characterize

ratherize the manners of a people in a
 state of ignorance and poverty. I mean
 that extraordinary *indolence*, so much ex-
 claimed against in the Irish nation. To
 agriculture and trade and civilization we
 can alone look for a removal of this de-
 fect. Industry is nothing but a habit,
 and these are capable of leading to the
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 which expand and exercise the faculties of
 the mind, and shake off that lethargy
 which creeps over the senses of barbarous
 nations. Whether we trace the character
 of the German, as delineated by the pen-
 cil of Tacitus, or actually behold the Irish
 boor; we shall find them both the same
 slothful beings. When the uneasiness
 which such a state of existence must na-
 turally create, leads them to action, it is
 only to acts of murder and rapine. Their
 dispositions accommodate themselves to
 the opposite extremes of indolence and
 turbulent aggression. "Mira diversitate
 naturæ," (says Tacitus,) "cum iidem ho-
 mines sic ament inertiam et oderunt quie-
 tem." The moment they cease to be de-
 spicable,

spicable, they become objects of dread and danger. An eloquent writer has comprized the whole of what I have endeavoured to explain in this letter, in these words: "The nation is at present divided into two almost distinct bodies, with little common interest, sympathy, or connection. One of these possesses all the franchises, all the property, all the education: the other is composed of drawers of water and cutters of turf for them. Are we to be astonished that when they are reduced to a mob, if they happen to act at all, they will act exactly like a mob, without temper, measure, or foresight *?"

I have now finished that hasty sketch of the features which seem to me, since I have been in Ireland, to stamp the character of the lower classes of the people, and separate them from the rich part of the nation. I may draw this conclusion from the examination of them both: The polished minority of the nation is one hundred years behind England in refine-

* Burke's Works, v. iii. p. 548. 4 edit.

ment and the rude majority of it is at least five. With many noble qualities of the heart, there is still much remaining for the slow operation of laws and civilization to effect. The virtues of courage and generosity are dimmed and obscured by a cloud of vices. With the rich, a lax system of morality is aided by the artificial varnish of fashionable manners and the laws of honour. With the poor it is replaced by the grossest superstition. How much the rich have benefited by the exchange, I leave you to determine. As for the poor, I think they must be acknowledged dreadful losers by it. I was always of opinion with Lord Verulam, that '*atheism* is better than superstition; for a man is then left to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws and to reputation; all which may guide moral virtue. But superstition dismounts all these, and erects an absolute monarchy in the mind of men *.'

Civil discords have also injured the cause of religion, and increased the natural fero-

* Essay on Superstition.

city of the Irish character. Their tendency is to banish the milder qualities of the heart, and to familiarize the mind to reflections at which it would naturally revolt with horror. A proportionate degradation of the morals and manners takes place, till at length the individual contemplates or engages in scenes of massacre and devastation without feeling any emotions of fear or remorse.

For my own part, I cannot conclude this long letter (which is short, considering how extensive the nature of the subject of it is), without again repeating, that I do not know of any country where the character of the people is more fitted by nature, than is that of the Irish, for the highest attainments in moral or intellectual excellence. The bountiful hand of the Almighty has given the materials ; it must be the care of a legislator to form and fashion them. That there is a great portion of talent given them, may be judged of from the examples they have afforded us in a Berkeley, a Swift, a Goldsmith, a Burke and a Sheridan.

dan. There may be more good sense in England, but there is wanting the life and energy of the Irish character. Strong passions awaken the faculties, and suffer not a particle of the man to be lost. That they possess those warm passions and sentiments which may be directed to the highest moral energies, I have already made appear. Virtue has been shewn to be nothing but passion disciplined by reason and habit. Aristotle has even called it 'reflecting appetite,' and 'impassioned intellect *.' From this association then proceeds all that is amiable, and all that is honourable, in society. From this co-operation the head acquires wisdom, and the heart temperance, fortitude and justice. Whether you consider the happiness of individuals or of nations, it will be found in both to arise from the same sources. If you improve the man in knowledge and virtue, you thereby improve the state in them. There is a chain in society, which plainly accounts for it. Men form the rudiments of fami-

* Ethics to Nicomachus.

lies ; families constitute the elements of states ; and in every system the parts will be found by their respective excellencies to promote the perfection and harmony of the whole.

I am, &c. &c.

LETTER

LETTER II.

ON THE PRACTICAL MERITS OF THE
GOVERNMENT, &c. &c.

MY DEAR SIR,

THERE is no nation in the world where the effects of jarring and discordant interests are so visible, as in the one where I am at present an obscure visitor. They force themselves upon the attention of the most superficial observer. The animosities of the people are so great and irreconcilable, that a most important and instructing lesson of politics is to be gathered from the collision. You may conclude that I was eager to take advantage of it, and to glean every information on a subject which from its importance to human happiness deserves the deepest consideration.

I set myself therefore attentively to work, in order to discover what were the causes of these contending interests and unhappy dissensions, which for so long a time have distracted Ireland. I soon found that they might almost all be traced to the establish-

X
ment of an English government over it, which was not only English in its birth and growth, but adopted merely for the benefit of those who were of the same origin. As I have in my preceding letter endeavoured to give you some idea of this people in their individual capacities, as men ; I shall devote the present one to the design of considering them in their political situation, as citizens. The discussion is indeed difficult and perplexing, since it has divided the opinions of the greatest statesmen of the age we live in. I shall however endeavour to narrow it as much as possible. It will be my aim to tread over such ground as I cannot slip or stumble on, to choose such a path as I cannot easily wander from ; and where I *do* deviate out of the beaten road, it will be, like a faithful traveller, only to notice such facts and objects as I thought worth describing.

But perhaps it will be observed to me in this political outset: ' Unless your mind is unprejudiced by erroneous theories, you will see things through a false medium and with distempered optics. It is therefore
necessary

necessary that you should first examine into the strength of the basis upon which you build, lest the superstructure should be weak, from the sandy foundation upon which it rests.

My answer is ready: I acknowledge the truth of the intimation, and think myself in justice bound to declare the principles upon which I set out. It is the glory of honest men to find opportunities of disavowing pestilential doctrines. It is my pride to break a lance against the absurd systems which uphold despotism or justify popular phrensy. The reign of the House of Stuart ought to furnish to every Englishman a commentary on the one, and the excesses of the French Revolution on the other. But that religious system which deduced passive obedience from the attempt to trace government up to the Deity, has been long laid aside for the philosophical one which rests the foundation of authority upon contract. This darling child of modern times is not however likely to be long-lived. Both Hobbes and Rousseau, the guardians and champions of

it, have drawn altogether opposite consequences, though equally dangerous ones, from the same principle. When to their thus admirably illustrative glosses is added the light which experience has thrown upon the subject; I think it will be found that the accompanying antidote is powerful enough for the poison. Between the powers of action and reaction the mind is kept sound and healthy. The consequences of erroneous systems of politics, like the excesses of the human body, generally afford their own remedy. The unbiaſſed inquirer after truth is brought back to some standard from whence he has been insensibly led astray; some standard sanctioned and confirmed by the experience of ages.

I have thought it necessary to enter into this explanation, lest I should be thought to disapprove of the Irish government on account of its having been originally forced on the great majority of the nation, and still continuing inimical to what they consider their lawful interests. There is also no better guard against mistakes in politics and their dangerous consequences than a
right

right apprehension of first principles. To avoid the errors of modern innovators, mankind have been driven back to the philosophy of Aristotle. That wonderful ancient is obliged to instruct the moderns in a science, in which, after so long an interval of time, they have yet made no improvements, and which still continues in its first infancy. From the writings of that great man we are taught to consider the origin of government, not as the work of art or of intellect, much less as the result of contract; but as the consequence of a natural instinctive impulse towards comfort, convenience and security. Government was not made, created, or covenanted about, but arose out of human nature. It is coeval with society, and society is coeval with man. Laws, indeed, which were afterwards added, are artificial aids and contrivances to prop and support government. They thwart, controul and subject the passions of individuals, in order to prevent their injuring society. But the origin of political society is totally distinct. It was dictated by nature, and cherished by a conviction and sensation
of

of its utility. That same principle of general convenience which, for the well-being of mankind, necessarily gave rise to government, still holds it together, and must ever continue to do so. Utility is thus the moral principle upon which the obedience of citizens and the protection of magistrates rest. It was nature which established the subordinations of servant to master, of family to father, and of wife to husband. These three branches of domestic economy are the germe of all government: *Principium Urbis et quasi Seminarium Reipublicæ* *.

But in every state there are certain interests which are contending with each other for a preponderance, and from the elevation of one of which, or the combination of two or of the whole, the government receives its peculiar character and denomination. These three principles are talents, wealth, and numbers; birth being nothing more than the inheritance of a title to the rewards bestowed upon either of the two first. The best government must obviously be that in which these three

* See Cicero's Offices, b. 1. c. 17.

principles have their just preponderance, distinctions and honours. This combination can only be preserved by the establishment of different bodies, to each of which is assigned the guardianship of one of these principles, and a superintending distrust and jealousy of the other two. This is in other words nothing less than that government of check and controul which is emphatically called *free*, because no one principle is exalted on the depression of the others. And though the preservation of these three principles, or of that just weight which talents, property and numbers should have, is entrusted to bodies termed monarchical, aristocratical and democratic; still the government does not the less continue to be founded in nature and utility. Its genealogy still continues the same, and its moral principle, like the leaden ruler of the Lesbian architecture, equally accommodates itself to every form.

Thus, you see, I have not been obliged to tax my own unproductive invention for a political creed. I am not even obliged to go to the rich treasury of the fertile framers

framers of imaginary commonwealths, not to the Republic of Plato, not to the Utopia of More, not to the Oceana of Harrington. It is (as Burke observed on a similar occasion) before me, it is at my feet,

———— ‘The rude swain

Treads daily on it with his clouted shoon.’

In the Politics of Aristotle, we see the embryo of the British Constitution. It is a vulgar error to suppose that ancient was unacquainted with the advantages of a balanced government, of a government of check and controul, or even of a representative one *. There is not the least foundation to suppose, that they had escaped the notice of so deep an observer †.

* See the Preface to Dr. Gillies's Aristotle.

† I cannot refrain from embracing this opportunity of acknowledging my obligations to Mr. Mackintosh, for the light which he has thrown on Aristotle's Politics. The latest, the most elegant, and perhaps the best commentary or rather paraphrase ever made of these political writings was delivered by Mr. Mackintosh in the course of his Lectures on the Law of Nature and Nations, in Lincoln's-Inn Hall last winter. I am happy in paying this tribute of applause to an undertaking, at the execution of which throughout I had the satisfaction of being present.

Thus

Thus you see, my dear Sir, I proceed to inquire into the state of Irish politics, with a mind holding in equal indifference the principles and the conclusions flowing from that divine right which kings have set up, and that doctrine of contract which the populace oppose to it. I have proved my right, I have shewed my turnpike-ticket, an unprejudiced mind with an independent spirit, the passport to any inquiry. General advantage is the standard by which I have regulated my observations, and have measured the inferences which I have drawn from them. The prevalent form of government which is found to exist in any nation is a subject, to understand the nature of which thoroughly often requires some trouble, and is attended with great difficulty. But the criterion of the practical excellence of every government is level to the observation and capacity of every man. The state of the people is the mirror in which its merits or demerits may be always read. This is a standard which no accidental circumstances can vary.

Whatever then may be the preponderance

ance which a government gives to talents, to property, or to numbers, different modifications of which three antagonist principles make the differences in all the constitutions of Europe; there nevertheless remain two immutable and eternal rules, by which its practical merits are to be decided. The first of these flows from the nature of man, and is this: 'Under a good government the middle rank of people always *most* abounds.' The second rule springs from the most approved principles of politics, and the very essence of a balanced government. It is this: 'Under a government well administered, it is always difficult to ascertain to which of the three simple forms of government the constitution *most* approximates *.'

It is impossible to entertain a doubt that the moderately rich most abounding in a nation, is a sure test of a good practical government; if we consider that wealth produces insolence, and poverty the mean and ferocious vices. But moderate fortune is ever found to create that happy medium

* See Aristotle's Politics, book the sixth.

of character which is the true standard of human happiness. The two opposite extremes place mankind in a state of intellectual and moral degradation inconsistent with good government. The presumptuous arrogance and dropt greatness of immoderate wealth is however worse than the meanness of pedlars or ferocity of savages. The middle rank of people have also not only been ever found the best guardians of public liberty, but it has always been even found to exist in proportion to their prevalence. I trust that my other principle, concerning balanced power, carries with it its own demonstration. It may be called a leading *axiom* under a government of check and controul. Liberty can only be preserved by the unfettered operation of every wheel and member of this political mechanism. All the governments both of antiquity and of modern times will be found more or less free as they approach to this model of perfection *. But after all

* Polybius has taken great pains to prove that it existed in perfection in the Roman Constitution. Fragm. l. 6.

our researches, there will never be found any example so powerfully supporting both these criterion principles as the British Constitution, which stands proudly foremost and eminently conspicuous above all others to silence the sophist and convince the real philosopher.

Such then are the two principles, drawn from the theory which I have first explained, by which I have examined and judged of the Irish government. No disciple of Zoroaster could more firmly have relied on the truth of *his two principles*, than I have done. No devout Persian, no sanctified minister of the Magi, could more pertinaciously have resolved to adhere to them. They have been the *Zendavesta** of my political creed. You will find that they have been the beacon and the clue by which I have been guided through the many mazes and intricacies which are found in the labyrinth of politics.

* The religious doctrine of the Two Principles established amongst the ancient Persians by Zoroaster, was contained in a book called the *Zendavesta*.

The Irish government is in theory the rival of the British constitution; it is formed and fashioned upon the model of it; but in administration it differs *toto cælo*. Instead of being that balanced government of King, Lords and Commons; that constitution founded on a just and equal regard to talents, wealth and numbers, embodied in monarchical, aristocratical and democratical corporations, the respective interests of which are equitably adjusted, and reciprocally check and controul each other: it is in practice the corruption and very antipodes of them all. The truth is, that neither the King nor the Commons have any *real* share of the public authority. They form necessary, and I grant even nominal, members of the legislature; but in fact the aristocracy has a preponderance which outrages the arithmetic of politics. Neither is it the despotism of one House, but a tyrannizing junto, formed by a coalition amongst certain members of both Houses, that constitutes this odious aristocracy. Instead of there being any doubt

as to which of the simple forms of government the constitution inclines, there is the most barefaced exhibition of the little weight which either talents or numbers possess when put into the scales against birth and property.

You will perceive that I have inverted the order into which I arranged the two grand principles by which I judge of the Irish government, and have taken the liberty of discussing the last of them first. The reason why I have done so was, because the fact which I have measured by it, is of public notoriety. It is not necessary to have travelled into Ireland to acquire the knowledge of it. The existence of an odious aristocracy in it, is known to every man on your side of the water. But to apply the other principle, to observe whether the middle rank does or not abound; a voyage across the Irish sea is altogether indispensable. I proceed therefore to acquaint you with my observations as to that particular.

Here I will be bold enough to assert,
that

that the peculiarity which most strikes every stranger upon landing in Ireland, and of which I myself felt the full force, is that face of beggary, misery and starvation which every where presents itself. The streets of Dublin are crowded with craving wretches, whose distresses are shocking to humanity, and whose nakedness is hurtful to the eye of decency. With this misery of the lower classes (for in a greater or a less degree it pervades three fourths of the whole people of Ireland,) is contrasted the condition of the wealthy. Their public edifices, their palaces, their squares and the streets which diverge from them, and their equipages, are magnificent beyond measure. In the capital of the kingdom there is to be seen nothing of those groups of moderately dimensioned houses, inhabited by the middling classes of people, and suitable to a mediocrity of fortune, which compose the far greater part of the city of London. The dimensions of all the buildings in Ireland are in opposite extremes. The eye reverts, as in Egypt, from the

pyramid to the mud-cottage. The air is either 'mocked with idle state,' or the earth is defiled with more than Caffrarian wretchedness.

I visited the Houses of Parliament, and the Courts of Justice, which constitute two of the grandest piles of building in all Dublin. But neither law nor a constitution can exist in edifices: if they could, Ireland would indeed enjoy them. But what are these boasted terms of freedom and justice, but words and parchment, unless a people have rights and property to be protected? If they are only made the fortresses to uphold oppression, they become a curse instead of a blessing. If they are made the guards of property wrung by the tyranny of a few from the great mass of the people, they are nothing but a monument whose basis is the misery and oppression of the nation.

I looked on the Parliament-house in Dublin with its proud Corinthian pillars, its boast of ancient architecture, its magnificent porticoes, extent of building, glittering

tering cupola, and crowded statues which crown the whole, with delight and admiration. But its semi-circular front of Portland stone, only serves to screen so many hundred yards of houses which would otherwise disgust the eye. I next walked to the Four Courts, and surveyed that building from the opposite bank of the Liffey, to that on which the noble edifice bearing that name is situated. I was astonished at the elegance of its exterior, exhibiting all the embellishments which architectural and sculptural science can bestow. In order to take a view of the interior of the building, I then crossed the narrow stream of the Liffey, over a bridge which is the prototype of ours at Westminster *. As if making my approach to an Athenian temple, I ascended a lofty range of stone steps. I was soon ushered by an Irish

* Those who have seen the grand bridge thrown over the piece of water in the Duke of Marlborough's park at Blenheim, will be able to judge of the proportion which this model of Westminster Bridge bears to the breadth of Liffey.

Cicerone into a splendid circular hall, nearly seventy feet in diameter, from which the four courts of justice *radiate* at equal distances. My eye dwelt with pride and admiration on fluted shafts and Corinthian capitals. I enumerated the emblematical devices which adorn this hall; the signing the great charter of our common liberties by King John at Runnimead, and of those of the city of Dublin by King James, with crowds of feudal knights and barons bold, armed at all points. I looked higher towards the roof of the building, and numbered eight statues as if supporting the dome. There was Liberty and Eloquence, Prudence and Justice, Wisdom and Law, with Punishment, and lastly Mercy, bringing up the rear. Roving thus from ornament to ornament, from the intersecting black and white marble squares of the floor, which seemed formed like a planetarium to revolve round a common centre, up to the cupola where the emulous plaisterer had exerted all his skill; I began to fancy myself in one of those fairy palaces which

some ingenious romance-writers have described. But, by some accident in coming out, the talisman was broken, and the enchantment vanished in a moment. The visionary fabric melted into air. I found myself as much surprised as many other simple knights-errant have been when they awakened from a similar trance. My olfactory nerve * was assailed by the horrid stench which arises from the Liffey, (the *Cloaca Maxima* of Dublin;) my auditory nerves were assaulted with the clamorous importunities of a crowd of beggars; and my organs of sight turned away with disgust from every edifice and object within the horizon.

I was impatient to get into the country, for the accommodation which the Dublin hotels (they disdain the name of inns, and have no such thing,) offer to strangers is most execrable and intolerable. An Englishman, who has never travelled out of his own country, can form no adequate idea of their dirt and inconveniences. I had

* Vulgarly called the nose.

been much better accommodated in the most dreary and unfrequented recesses of North Wales. I could not possibly throw myself on the hospitality of my Irish friends, because at this season of the year they are in the country. I therefore followed their example as soon as I had seen every thing which Dublin could offer to the curiosity of a *foreigner*.

In the country, the contrast between the rich and the poor, the lord and the peasant, is as strongly marked as it is in Dublin. But I have endeavoured in my last letter to give you some idea of this class of people. I can only add to my description of this full picture of human misery, that I have read of the bondsmen and villeins of the ancient feudal system, and of the boors and vassals (*glebæ adscriptitii*) as they are now seen to exist in the tenures of modern Germany : but I cannot conceive the situation of either to be so miserable as that of the Irish peasantry. I know that the condition of the West India negro is a paradise to it. The slave in our colonies has meat
to

to eat and distilled spirit to drink, whilst the life of the Irish peasant is that of a savage who feeds upon milk and roots. His clothing, if indeed it deserves that name, is a system of 'loop'd and window'd raggedness,' and he lives in a clay-built cottage, such as I have described it to you. I assure you that I have felt for the dignity of human nature, when I have beheld a race of men, who, in form and motion, in stature and in countenance, were the pride of the species; on whose persons Heaven had lavished all its favours—

*Os sublime dedit, cælumque videre
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus :*

who are gifted with courage, with generosity, with all the heroic virtues, and with every thing that can give the world assurance of men: to see them, I say, humiliated and degraded to so wretched a condition. I am not the advocate of rebellion; but this I must say, that if such men as these are to be made Helots and Penests of, and chained to the cultivation of the soil without partaking of any of its fruits;
if

if a government fit only for the puny race of Asiatic climes is forced upon the hardy giant sons of the North ; their lords and rulers must expect that the avenging thunder will sometimes burst on their heads.

Such are the facts which in this country offer themselves to view ; and such is the character of the Irish government, in its practical merits, which the application of these two principles therefore obliges us to make. There is neither balanced power, nor a middle class of people. The country is divided between the disproportionately rich and the miserably poor. It is ruled by an aristocracy with a rod of iron. As under the despotisms of the East, there is scarce any intermediate station between the sultan and the slave. The free governments of Europe are perhaps distinguished from the despotic ones of the East, by nothing more than the opposite conditions of the great mass of the people. The comprehensive policy of the one produces the peace and happiness of the whole : but in Asiatic monarchies we see a splendid focus
collected

collected in the centre, with misery and weakness in all the extremities. Such is the case in Ireland. There is no powerful nobility, no judicial corporation, no mercantile interests to temper and moderate the power of the aristocracy over the people, because these very bodies are themselves the component parts of the aristocracy.

This is the miserable government which subsists in Ireland. How long it will exist, God alone knows; but, if I may venture to predict, it will not be long. The aristocracies of the world seem to have lived their day. They have perished in most other countries, and cannot long survive in Ireland. This at least I will venture to assert, that not even the plebeians of old Rome ever sighed so much for the removal of that patrician power by which they were oppressed, as the Irish do for that of the petty tyrants who rule over them.

Upon the crisis of this great contest, the welfare of Ireland altogether depends. The parties are now at issue on it. Until the
matter

matter is decided, the country will remain in its present confusion. ' For while a system of administration is attempted, entirely repugnant to the genius of the people, and not conformable even to the real principle of their government, every thing must necessarily be disordered for a time, until this system destroys the true constitution, or the constitution gets the better of this system.'

I am, &c. &c.

LETTER

LETTER III.

OF THE RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES OF THE
IRISH, &c. &c.

MY DEAR SIR,

IT is a peculiarity known only to Ireland, perhaps of all other countries, that its inhabitants are more distinguished from each other, on account of their religious opinions, than they are by any other criterion. To this as a leading *cause* may be traced that extreme state of oppression in which I have described the poor as living. It is their misfortune to be born Roman Catholics, and to adhere to that religion which their ancestors have professed ever since the gospel was first preached in the island. That pure and humble religion which was sent from Heaven to unite all the nations of the earth in piety, harmony and universal love, has proved to this country a source of the most bloody and implacable animosities.

If

If I was about to give a perfect stranger to the political connections of Great Britain some general idea of the condition of the people of Ireland in the article of religion, I should desire him to abstract himself for a moment, and endeavour to conceive what must be the relation between the conquerors and the natives of some fresh invaded country. If his fancy could paint him a lively picture of the soreness, jealousy and distrust which must exist, he would then comprehend the situation of the Irish. No animosity can be more irreconcilable, no jealousy more watchful, and, I will venture to add, no dread so irremovable, as that which subsists between the government and the subjects of this kingdom.

If you stay for a moment to consider the outline of the history of the connection between Great Britain and Ireland, you will be able to account for it. You will see the causes of this despotism in government and intolerance in religion. It is a beadroll of broils and battles. Henry the
Second

Second invaded Ireland about six hundred years ago, but very imperfectly conquered it, and planted some colonies in it. It was at that time plunged in such extreme barbarity, that we are informed by the historians of the age, that only a few English of desperate fortunes could be persuaded to transport themselves into the country*. That few however had great difficulty to maintain their station; attempts being perpetually made to expel the colony. It was not till the reign of James the First, that the island was completely subdued. He endeavoured to civilize the natives by abolishing their barbarous usages and customs, and substituting in their room the benefits of English government, laws and manners. But in this he met with great opposition, the Irish being strongly attached to a sort of wild unwritten system of jurisprudence, called their Brehon law, the leading feature of which was that of inflicting a pecuniary

* See Brompton, p. 1069, and Neubrig, 403, quoted in Hume's Life of Henry II.

commutation

commutation on all offences, including even murder.

Unfortunately the exertions of James were opposed not merely by the brutality and ignorance of the Irish, but with an obstacle of the most unsurmountable nature, which had but lately arisen. This was that bar which the reformation had placed between the natives, and the colonists who followed the religion of the mother country. The consequence was, that the opposition which laws, interest and manners had long before created, was inflamed by religious antipathy, the most deadly of all passions. To the old distinction between colonist and native was superadded that of Protestant and Catholic. Into these two distinct bodies of Protestant colonists and Catholic natives, the nation has ever since continued to be divided. This added fresh fuel to the flame of their former dissensions, and may be considered as the cause of all the calamities which have since afflicted this unfortunate country. Religion, instead of

tending to heal the discontents which the government occasioned, heightened and increased them. Instead of their co-operating in a tendency to make good citizens, they have created irreconcilable enemies. I shall endeavour to give you some account of the state of the Catholics and of the Protestants, in a regular order.

1. The *Catholics*, I have already observed, are the real natives of Ireland, and the original rightful possessors of the soil. But the progress of English conquest and confiscation has by degrees totally dispossessed them of it. When the war of arms was suspended, that of chicane and hostile statutes commenced. Self-defence drove the natives to resistance, and the efforts of their despair were made the pretext for fresh oppressions. The Irish always looked upon the colonists as intruders and robbers, and have embraced every opportunity of expelling them from their country. They have been the associates of every domestic and foreign enemy to the government of England. They have joined every pretender to the crown from

Lambert Simnel down to Edward Stuart. We have never been at war with the French, the Spaniards, or the Emperor, but those powers have found their account in stirring up the native Irish. They have always been opposed to us in the armies of our enemies, and, by their desperate valour alone, have often stood in the way of our victories. *Annales veterum delicta loquentur: hærebunt maculae.* The consequences of such strong disaffection towards the English have been such as might naturally be expected. Attainder has been followed up by attainder, and confiscation by confiscation. In the reign of James the whole province of Ulster came to the crown, and equally immense tracts of land were taken from the Catholics in the times of Cromwell and William the Third. By these means, the interest of three millions of natives in their own soil has been at length almost totally extirpated. Penal laws and disqualifying statutes, some of which still remain, completely foreclosed the possibility of their ever regaining that interest. They were deprived of the right of electing representatives,

tatives, and still continue shut out from seats in Parliament *. Every office and every franchise, ecclesiastical, civil and military, was taken from them ; and the merciless unrelenting hand of the law, having stripped them naked, turned them out of doors, that miserable populace which we now behold them. For my own part, since I have been in Ireland, I have invariably ascertained that almost every pitiable object in rags and misery was a Catholic ; and that almost every man who enjoyed the advantages of food and cloathing obtained them by his Protestantism. They carry these palpable badges of their religious differences about them. It is utterly impossible that the contrast can be more striking, between the lazy luxurious European and the naked starved Asiatic on the plains of Hindostan.

2. I take my leave of the Catholics for the present, and turn to the *Irish Protestants*. These are the colonists who have migrated

* By Stat. 3. W. & M. c. 2.

from the mother country, and who have been fed by the plunder gained by conquest and confiscation. The Protestant religion has also been long the badge of that aristocracy which in my last letter I have mentioned as tyrannizing over Ireland.

But the Protestant colonists in this country are divided into two classes; those of the Church of England, and those of the Church of Scotland. The descendants of the English are of the first order; and these are the wealthy inhabitants of Dublin, Waterford, Cork, and the whole southern and eastern coasts. They are like the rich embroidered border of a tattered and thread-bare mantle. The second class is composed of emigrants from Scotland, their heirs and successors. These are spread over all the northern provinces of the kingdom, enjoying a tolerable share of the commerce of the country and some of its landed property. Of each of these in their order.

Conquest and confiscation constitute the title of the Protestant who issued from
England.

England. Military service was in general the consideration he paid, and his sword his title-deed. The followers of Cromwell, and the heroes who afterwards gained the battle of the Boyne, which confirmed the settlement of the English, were rewarded with the estates of those who fell by the sword or the hands of the executioner.

The spoils of the slain were left to those who fought for something more than glory. 'When the lion had sucked the blood of his prey, he threw the offal carcases to his jackalls in waiting*.' These hands still engross all the church patronage, all the honours, and the far greater part of the landed property of the country.

3. As the pride of Alexander could bear no equal with him in power, so did the jealousy of the Anglo-Irish influence them in their conduct towards the Scotch. The far greater part of this numerous body, computed at near 1,000,000, settled in Ireland in the reign of their countryman James the First. But these adventurers,

* Burke.

and fellow-labourers in the same vineyard with the English, were not admitted to an equal footing with them. The supreme power of the state has been always almost exclusively in the hands of the Protestants. The Dissenters were for a long time excluded, not only from all share in the legislature, but even from all subordinate offices of magistracy. The test and corporation acts, which deprived them of all secondary offices of magistracy under the government, have however been at length repealed; at least so far as concerns the civil power of the state.

The Dissenters are an opulent and enlightened body of men, possessing large landed estates, and having exclusively in their own hands great part of the commerce of the country. The linen trade, that great staple of Irish wealth, is a child of their own rearing. They established it themselves; brought it to perfection by their own industry; and of course have the emoluments of it exclusively in their own hands. There remains therefore no source
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of discontent and uneasiness which they can reasonably complain of, except their exclusion from church patronage and ecclesiastical wealth and honours.

These are the prominent religious distinctions which prevail in Ireland. They exist also in England, but the consequences of them are not so oppressive. They affect but a small part of the population of the country; but in Ireland they tyrannize over the whole inhabitants. The stigma of religion is attached to more than three millions of Catholics, and to nearly one million of Dissenters. Not more than five hundred thousand Protestants can be therefore said to enjoy fully the benefits of civil government *.

I should be ashamed not to add myself to the list of the advocates for that universal toleration which is every day gaining

* Dr. Jackson, in a paper intended to have been sent to France, but which was seized, and fully proved on his trial, estimates the population of Ireland at 4,500,000; of which 450,000 are Protestants, 900,000 Dissenters, and 3,150,000 Catholics.

partisans, and which looks to the removal of all religious distinctions in society. The world has never yet enjoyed the full benefits of Christianity. The peace and harmony which it was intended to promote have never yet been sufficiently comprehensive. There has always been hitherto great ground for complaint, and great room for improvement. The prescriptions of antiquity are nothing when compared with those of modern religion. It is true that Christianity has removed those wide-spread scenes of desolation which marked the progress of such conquerors as Attila, Zingis and Tamerlane; but it has left in the room of them discords between the citizens of the same state, and religious factions whose domestic conflicts are most bloody and implacable. Mankind have never yet fully learnt the important lesson of bearing with other religious opinions than those of their own party.

I trust however that the period is not far off, when all religious tests both in Great Britain and Ireland will be removed; that

the Protestant Dissenters will be received into the bosom of the state as virtuous citizens, and the Roman Catholics as loyal subjects. There is no other test except that of religion which either of them declare themselves aggrieved by. There can be no political ordeal, as the test of loyalty, to which they are unwilling to submit. It is merely to scruples of conscience which they attend, in objecting to existing tests. Every security for their loyalty and attachment to the government, which the safety of the state shall require or think necessary, they freely offer to give. Their argument is this: A man may be an useful member of society, a loyal subject, and even a good citizen, without professing to make creeds, ordinals, or articles, the rule of his conscience.

The statutes made in the thirtieth year of Charles the Second's reign, and in the third of William and Mary's, both require that all peers and members of parliament shall take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy before they can sit or vote
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in either house. The oath of allegiance to his Majesty, the Catholics are willing to subscribe to. The oath of supremacy first requires them to abjure the damnable doctrine, that princes excommunicated by the Pope may be deposed and murdered by their own subjects. The Catholics have no objection to subscribe to this also.

But the second part of the oath of supremacy, which requires them to declare that no foreign person, prelate or state hath any power, jurisdiction, pre-eminence or authority, *ecclesiastical or spiritual*, within this realm, they object to, because it interferes with the first principle of their religion, which is the acknowledgment of the Pope as the head of the Catholic church. It is thus merely a scruple of conscience which excludes them from their seats in the legislature. And even this scruple might be easily avoided, by the parliament altering two words in the oath of supremacy, and substituting *civil or temporal* in the place of '*ecclesiastical or spiritual*.' It might do this without destroying any security erected
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for the preservation of the government. I am persuaded that it is called upon to do this by every principle of justice, of liberality, and of a free constitution.

It is unnecessary for me to shew you, that the Dissenters of England are excluded from offices and employments by the test and corporation acts. They require as qualifications for holding these places, that certain oaths shall be taken, and also that the sacrament shall be received in a Protestant church. It is from religious scruples therefore the Dissenters are oppressed, as well as the Roman Catholics. Any political test which shall be required of them, they are also willing to undergo. The only point therefore, upon which any difference is entertained, is that of the propriety of making religious opinions the qualification for holding political power. I confess, that upon this great question my opinion has been always most decidedly made up.

The evil political tendency of the Roman
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man Catholic faith is the principal ground upon which their enemies defend the laws enacted against them. But certainly the invocation of saints, doctrine of transubstantiation, and such tenets, are innocent to society. As to that spiritual supremacy which their *own* church acknowledges to be in the Pope, it cannot with justice be misconstrued and perverted into any denial of his Majesty's title to be considered as Head of the Church of England. Neither is it equitable to infer that they are enemies to the established government because they differ from the established religion, when that presumption is not only rebutted by their own express declarations, but evinced by long and tried loyalty, with a readiness to undergo the ordeal of any political test which it shall be thought necessary to impose on them.

So long as civil duties are distinct and independent of religious opinions, the non-conformists to Protestantism have therefore every right which law or justice can afford

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to be considered as loyal subjects, and to be admitted to the enjoyment of the constitution under which they are born.

It must be allowed by all parties, that by these laws some millions of subjects are deprived of their natural and inalienable birth-rights. Some great and commanding necessity can alone justify this exclusion. These men are members of the state; they contribute their share; according to their ability, towards the expences of the state; and why are they not admitted to enjoy every benefit and franchise which it can afford? Let it not be insinuated, that the defence of the constitution is connected with that of the ecclesiastical establishment. It is not only a libel on the Protestant religion to assert that it is maintained by any thing but its own evidences, truth and merits; but it is also unfair to infer that it will be endangered by an equitable toleration of other religions. It would rather seem to add to its security, by removing all grounds of resentment against it. For it is an eternal truth, that every religion
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which is persecuted becomes itself persecuting. As soon as by some accidental turn it arises from depression, it attacks the religion which persecutes it, not as a religion but as a tyranny. The security of every religion depends therefore, in a great measure, on its toleration of other religions; for it then never fails of meeting with a return of the like mildness and indulgence.

Toleration is undoubtedly one of the oldest principles of the constitution. The leading article of the great charter of our liberties (and Irish liberties are our liberties, for the same laws govern in both countries); the first article, I say, of Magna Charta directs that no man shall be disturbed in the exercise of his religion, and that the Church of England shall be *free*. And though the arrogant pretensions of the See of Rome formerly rendered it necessary to guard against its usurpations in these countries, yet that storm has long blown over, and that power long been shipwrecked. It is as ridiculous to suspect danger from the Court of Rome
now,

now, as it would be to dread the ambition of their renowned forefathers. We have suffered from each in Great Britain, and we now may in safety despise them both.

The laws against the Roman Catholics are therefore founded upon ridiculous, absurd and antiquated principles of policy totally inapplicable to the present times. Their existence without the necessity under the pressure of which they were enacted, is inconsistent with the policy of a liberal and enlightened nation. It is committing the greatest injustice, and violating every principle both of natural and positive law. For, to punish a man for speculative opinions which have neither dangerous effects nor dangerous tendencies, is the highest injustice and the greatest violation of national freedom. It does this by creating disqualifications. To disqualify a man is to punish him by affixing the stigma of mistrust on him. Not even a life of service can wash away the disgrace or remove the jealousy of these laws. The army of Great Britain

tain is filled with Scotch Dissenters, and the militia of Ireland is almost wholly composed of Catholics. And yet though they are trusted with arms in their hands, yet they still labour under suspicions of disaffection, and the most tyrannical proscriptions.

There is a spirit of generosity which when adopted in the policy of a nation never fails of meeting with a full return of merit and services. The Romans knew the full value of this liberal principle. They granted the freedom of their city, with a full share of its honours and privileges, to Latium, to Italy, and lastly to the provinces. They sacrificed even their vanity, to the increasing their power. Virtue and merit was adopted as their own, wherever it was met with. Not even slaves or strangers, enemies or barbarians, were shut out. By shunning that narrow policy which had ruined Athens and Sparta, her strength increased with her good fortune, and as she gained her authority she was sure to confirm it. But, as Harrington
has

as remarked in the preliminary to his Oceana, there is a ' meanness and poorness in modern prudence, not only to the damage of civil government, but of religion itself. To make a man in affairs of conscience, which admit not of demonstration, engage to believe just as a private or metropolitan does, is the highest absurdity.' It is cramping the spirit of free inquiry, and doing the greatest injury to the cause of truth.

For my part, I have always been inclined to doubt whether the discords, intolerances and persecutions which have accompanied the introduction of Christianity, have not more than counterbalanced the benefits which the world has received from it as a system of ethics. ' *Corruptio optimi pessima*,' is an eternal truth. When I speak in a political sense, I place its truth and divine rewards out of the question. Its earthly object was, to promote peace and brotherly love. Its real effects have been, to occasion more war and tumults than can be attributed to any other single cause. Its dis-

ciples seem to have been zealous to invent unintelligible doctrines on which differences in opinion might ensue. First the Trinity was a pretext for bloodshed, and then the doctrines of the Incarnation created a theological war of 250 years*. But Christians no longer trouble their heads with these subjects, having invented new creeds and articles about which they persecute each other. It might have been hoped that the Reformation would have stilled the flames of religious disputes amongst ourselves; but it has turned out otherwise. Men have not been wanting who have kept alive the spirit of church party, and converted ‘this madness of the *many* to the gain of the *few*.’ Human creeds and articles have been invented and made the tests

* We now justly laugh at these absurdities, and enjoy Ben Jonson’s ridicule, where he introduces his Inigo Lantern disputing on them with his puppet at Bartholomew’s Fair—‘*It is so* ;’ ‘*It is not so* ;’—for half an hour together. But the advocates for our modern *Tests* should recollect the inimitable Addison’s story of the *Day Watchman* and his attendant the Goose—*Spectator*, No. 367.

of

of party, not the standards of truth. Those whose consciences have been large enough to swear to them, have found no inconvenience from their establishment : but as interest and conscience are often at variance, the temptations to perjury are too great for a wise legislature ever to hold out.

The habits of the superstitious part of every nation ought to be seconded by the reflections of the enlightened. Unless this is done, religion can produce no advantage to a state. Theological rancour only serves to embitter the superstition of a people. If the Paganism of antiquity had any exclusive merit which Christianity cannot boast of, it was that mutual indulgence, that religious concord and universal spirit of toleration which it produced. Such was the mild spirit of antiquity, that, as it has been well observed by an eloquent historian, ‘ nations were less attentive to the *differences* than to the *resemblances* of their religious worship *.’

* Gibbon.

I must indeed confess, that I look forward to see the same liberal and enlightened policy adopted in these islands. I trust and hope that the cause of universal toleration is every day gaining ground, and that we shall soon see Christians of every denomination united as the children of one God, as disciples of one faith, and as the coheirs of one and the same inheritance *. I trust, that before another century is elapsed our posterity will wonder that the world could have been so long divided by a religion which ought to have united them;—that to the blessings of a free government will be added that of a free toleration;—that our Scotch fellow-subjects will no longer be outraged by tests, nor our Irish brethren by penal statutes. Our well poised and balanced constitution will by this attain perfection; for *religious power will then be balanced against religious power, as civil power has hitherto been against civil.*

* Unius Dei parentis homines, consortes fidei, spei cohæredes. M. Fel. 313. ed. Ouzeli.

To the mutual dependence and mutual check of three legislative bodies, will be added that of three religions. In an imperial parliament of Great Britain and Ireland, the same principle which preserves the interests of King, Lords and Commons, will preserve that of Catholics, Protestants and Dissenters. The authority of England, Scotland and Ireland will give a due preponderance to the respective religions of the majority of each of their inhabitants. Three kingdoms will support and maintain inviolate, their three separate modes of faith.

The Presbyterians of England will no longer suffer under unjust and invidious exclusions from power, nor the Catholics of Ireland under a local aristocracy and general proscription. By obliterating partial distinctions we shall insensibly coalesce into one great nation, united by language, manners and civil institutions. We shall then be equal to the weight of a powerful empire. The annals of religious persecution and of Christian animosities will meet with a full and final period.

period. The true ends of religion, which are to promote glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good-will towards men, will be fully attained. The true ends of a free constitution, which are to afford universal protection and happiness, will be enjoyed; and all men, parties and opinions will rally round a throne to support a government which will then be more deservedly than ever, what it has long continued, the envy and admiration of the world.

I am, &c. &c.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

OF SOME OTHER DISADVANTAGES UNDER
WHICH THE IRISH NATION LABOURS,
IN AGRICULTURE, &c. &c.

MY DEAR SIR,

ALTHOUGH government and religion are subjects which most engage the attention of mankind, and which I have therefore treated of in my two last letters, yet there are other topics still left behind which at least are equally important. They are not indeed so much the objects which history celebrates, because history is little more than a record of the crimes of ambition; but they are those upon which the happiness and greatness of nations most depend. That happiness may be varied by the degrees of freedom and security which governments are instituted to afford; but the first step towards the existence of happiness must depend upon the people's possessing

selling the necessaries and conveniences of life.

It has therefore, you know, been considered by the writers on the science of politics, that the first duty which a state owes to its members, the first object of civil society, is to provide for the necessities of the people. Unless a government takes care to furnish its subjects with an happy plenty of the necessaries and conveniences of life, and protects them in the peaceable enjoyment of these advantages, it defeats the very end and object of its institution. Montesquieu observes, ' Quelques aumones
' que l'on fait à un homme nud dans les
' rues, ne remplissent point les obligations
' de l'état, qui doit à tous les citoyens une
' subsistence assurée, la nourriture, une vête-
' ment convenable, et un genre de vie qui ne
' soit contraire à la santé*.' Every individual who cannot command the comforts and conveniences of life from wealth hereditary or acquired, has yet nevertheless an equivalent to give in exchange for them.

* De l'Esprit des Loix, liv. 23. ch. 29.

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This is his personal labour and industry. These must constitute the only titles of the majority of the people in every state to the possession of them.

A government therefore, to fulfil its first duty, must encourage labour, animate industry, and excite abilities. It must take such measures that every man may live by his own honest exertions. It must propose honours, rewards and privileges for those who distinguish themselves. When it does these things, it has the effect of making the state powerful and the subjects happy. When it neglects them, the state is weak and the people are miserable.

But though this great charge is entrusted to the care of a legislator, yet every thing is not left to him to provide for. Nature has done her full share. She has given the earth to afford subsistence to its inhabitants, and every country by the industry of its people may enjoy the fruits of it. It is therefore on the exertion of that labour, which a government must bring about, that it discharges its duty. Agriculture is
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the nurse of a state, and its surest and best resource. It is the most solid fund of wealth to a people, and, of all arts, it is by far the most useful and necessary *. For though in some countries Nature has rendered it almost unnecessary, by that fertility of soil and beauty of climate which she has given them, yet it is generally found that the state must hold out encouragement to it by proper laws and regulations. And though even in the most fertile countries the people enjoy the necessities of life without toil or labour, yet they cannot on that account be called rich or powerful. Neither land nor gold is wealth, but as it is made such by industry. A man might possess twenty miles of land around him in the wilds of America, and yet starve. The African is poor and destitute even in the midst of his golden sands. Even money is but an artificial standard for estimating

* ‘*Omnium rerum ex quibus aliquid exquiritur, nihil agriculturâ melius, nihil uberius, nihil dulcius, nihil libero homine dignius,*’ is the well known panegyric which it drew from Cicero.

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the value of the produce of industry. It is nothing but a 'ticket or a counter,' which is of imaginary not of real value, and which, as the Scythian Anacharfis observed, only serves for the convenience of *calculation*.

But, to hasten to my application of these principles: I have described the Irish nation as miserably destitute of all the comforts and conveniences of life. I have been told in reply, that they are an *indolent* people. I have acknowledged the truth of the remark, and have accordingly considered idleness as one of the characteristics of the nation. But then I assert, that they would not be so if they were well governed. Industry may be roused by encouragement; it may be *created*, by exciting the passions of self-preservation or of self-interest. Unless employment is held out, it is unjust to accuse them of idleness: unless the means of enriching them are afforded and laid open, it is highly absurd to upbraid them with their poverty.

I assert that agriculture, which is the
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most natural means of employing their industry, is in Ireland too much discouraged. Nothing but pasture lands are to be seen. Grazing of cattle is their grand passion. The farmer feels it his interest to devote his lands to it, and to neglect tillage. I am also credibly informed, that the cultivation of those lands which are laid out in tillage is in general so very defective, that not above half of the crops are gathered which the fertility of the soil could afford. The cause of this preference given to pasture is altogether a moral one: the farmer finds it his interest. But a legislator that regarded the happiness of the people, and the prosperity of the nation, would *make* it his interest to cultivate agriculture as a science, and dedicate his lands and attention to it. The increase of pasture lands in England was formerly the subject of universal complaint, but by prudent regulations England is now one of the best cultivated countries in the world. Might not the same means be adopted in Ireland, and with the same success? It is obvious that pasture lands afford

employment

employment to a comparatively small number of the inhabitants of a country, and food to much less than agriculture does. And though it may be said that the mode of living amongst the Irish is simple, and such as that bread is not a necessary article of consumption; yet granting that this is partly true, I assert that the mode of living will not do every thing, and that it should even be the endeavour of laws to alter it *so as* to give employment to the people, and kindle amongst them a more general spirit of industry.

The first step to be taken in order to promote the spirit of agricultural industry, is to secure to the farmer the fruits of his own labour. He must have secured to him the advantage of every improvement which he shall make; and this can only be done by granting long leases at fixed rents. If the farmer works for the benefit of another, and not for his own, his industry will proportionably abate. If the advantages of all improvements are not to be secured to

himself,

himself, is it reasonable to expect that he will be at the pains of making them ?

It should therefore be the object of the legislature, to prevent, if possible, all strangers to the estate from enjoying any profits from it. It is well known that in Ireland there are very frequently three or four intermediate landlords between the farmer and the owner of the estate. In order that these mesne holders may enjoy a considerable advantage from their bargains, they are obliged to tie down the poor peasant to the most exorbitant rents, and rack him in the most unmerciful manner. It has always been the policy of the law of England to discourage as much as possible these under-tenancies or sub-infeudations. Their effects are, to enrich strangers and interlopers, by the impoverishment of the estate, by the owner's deprivation of his just profits, and by the plunder of the terre-tenant. It is to be lamented that the Parliament of Ireland have never attempted a remedy to this evil.

Upon

Upon the same principle of excluding strangers to the estate from deriving any profit from it, the legislature should abolish tithes in Ireland. Even in England they are oppressive, but in Ireland they are highly impolitic as well as tyrannical. They operate as a bounty upon pasturage, and occasion the neglect of tillage in Ireland, perhaps more than any other cause.

The peasant after discharging his rent has to pay tithes to a clergy he abhors, and then to contribute his dues towards the maintenance of his own Catholic pastor. Between the exactions of the three his oppression is most extreme. His slavery is both temporal and spiritual, but the latter is the most galling. It is indeed true, that the socage landlords are obliged to content themselves with the performance of bodily services, and the payment of rent wrung from the peasant by hands habituated to the gripings of usury. They certainly exert their power of *distress* to its utmost extent. But the tithe-claimant is (and ever will be considered in spite of sophistry)

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an odious stranger to an estate; and the Popish priest, this lord in frankalmoigne, brandishing the two-edged sword of St. Peter, *exact*s his homage, and fealty, and *free alms*, with the most inexorable severity. Tithes should therefore at least be abolished, as checking industry; and if a substitute must be contrived in lieu of them, let it be something which shall rather encourage industry than discountenance it. Corn rents have been proposed as an unobjectionable alteration, and I confess that I see no room to disapprove of them.

Another important disadvantage under which the peasantry of Ireland labour, is the non-residence of the greater part of landlords on their estates. The sum of money which it is calculated is annually sent out of the kingdom to the absentee proprietors of estates is enormous and incredible. I have heard it estimated at a very large portion indeed of the whole rental of the kingdom. This is undoubtedly a great grievance to the poor tenants of an estate. Instead of being gladdened
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with the presence of their landlords, as is the case in England, and enjoying their share in the returned fruits of their own industry circulating back through the channels from whence it originally flowed, they are obliged to labour for far distant masters. But this has been so much, and for such a length of time, a topic of invective to the well-wishers of Ireland, that I forbear enlarging farther on it.

But, granting that even these great checks to agriculture and industry were retained, still a wise legislature might find means to counteract their bad effects. If the peasant, notwithstanding them, can gain more profit by agriculture than by pasturage, he will adopt it. The legislature should ensure him of it, and the example of other countries will shew how successfully the attempt has been made.

This has arisen from considering corn not merely as an article of provision or necessary food, but as an article of merchandize, or as the object of commerce. In order that the farmer should grow not
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only as much as is necessary for subsistence, but sometimes even more by the certainty of having a good market, and getting a good price for it ; the system of giving *bounties on exportation* has been introduced. When the plenty has been such that he could not get a fair price at home, it is made up to him by the government on his sending it abroad. Instead of the subject paying heavy duties to the state on exportation, the state finds its interest in paying him to do it. Before this principle was adopted in England, and before she cultivated corn for other nations as well as for herself, the agriculture of England was very inconsiderable. It is therefore to this policy, combined with that of the Navigation Act, that the best French writers on the subject have finally attributed the whole superiority in commercial greatness which England enjoys over all the other nations of Europe*.

In

* Les Intérêts de la France mal entendus dans les Branches de l'Agriculture, &c. 2 vols. 12mo. at Amsterdam,

In order to prevent every inconvenience which may result from sending too much corn out of a kingdom, nothing is so easy as to take off these bounties upon proper occasions, and lay them on the *importation* of it, at the same time that heavy duties are laid on exporting it. Other expedients have also been sometimes successfully adopted, for the same purpose. Such is the establishment of granaries or public magazines of corn. By this institution the farmer is always sure of having a certain price for his corn, because the market can never be overstocked in the commodity. Neither is it possible that there should ever be too small a quantity in it. When from the great plenty there is any danger of the price getting too low, the government purchases the overplus after private individuals have bought what they wanted. But when, on the other hand, the scarcity is such that the price must rise above its just standard,

sterdam, 1757, supposed to be written by Mr. Bou-
lainvilliers: see vol. i. p. 93 to 111, and vol. ii. p. 123.
See also L'Ami des Hommes, vol. iii. p. 259.

the granaries are then opened, and every inconvenience is obviated.

But though this policy is adopted with advantage in Switzerland, in order to prevent the corn of the country being sold at too low a rate to foreigners, from whom it has been sometimes necessary to purchase it back again at an exorbitant price; yet it has been generally found that a well-regulated system of exportation is the best encouragement to agriculture. It is found more effectually to prevent pernicious monopolies. It is also recommended by the advantages it affords to navigation, and the number of seamen it employs in the management of the vessels which are engaged in the carriage of corn to foreign countries.

These are the expedients to which Great Britain has had recourse, in order to bring its agriculture to that pitch of improvement at which it now stands. Instead of being frequently obliged as formerly to have recourse to other nations for support, she is now the granary of the world. Nothing but
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the accidental badness of the seasons can lessen the happy plenty she enjoys. Why should not similar pains and attention have been bestowed by the Irish legislature on the important subject of agriculture? Why, instead of lavishing the revenues of the state in support of idle placemen, in the maintenance of destructive factions, and in building ridiculous edifices, has she not devoted part of them to counteract the abuses which oppress the peasantry, and discourage agriculture and industry? She might, with half the expence which the maintenance of her aristocracy has cost the nation, have been as flourishing in agriculture as Great Britain herself is. Thousands of famished subjects might have been employed in the cultivation of the earth, and the peasants would have found their native country the seat of plenty and happiness, instead of being the lowest sink of beggary and wretchedness.

Every country is capable of feeding its own inhabitants; but the soil and climate of Ireland are so excellent, that with good cultivation it might even contribute towards

supporting its neighbours. For, though the quantity of unprofitable land is very great; though, if you calculate the bogs, the rocks, and the barren mountains, that quantity is perhaps more than double what is to be seen in England; yet the fertility of the remainder, and the temperature of the air, amply compensate for the defect. The country possesses the convenience of safe ports and havens in a greater degree perhaps than any other European nation. But yet, notwithstanding all these advantages, the fact is, that the greater part of the provisions which are consumed in the country are brought from England. The poor, not having the means of purchasing these, are in want of common sustenance, without either house or cloaths to cover them from the inclemencies of the weather.

The reason of this misery may be traced to that want of employment in which the bulk of the people live. Their industry is checked by discouragements. All improvements in agriculture are thwarted by the covetousness of landlords, and the exactions of the clergy. The legislature does not counteract

counteract these checks, but are satisfied with sacrificing the good of the nation to their own private interests.

The rage for tillage every day gains ground, and the country, instead of advancing towards civilization, every day recedes from it and sinks into the grossest barbarity.

Such is the deplorable condition in which Ireland stands with respect to agriculture. The first means by which every civilized nation exerts the industry of its inhabitants, and provides for their wants, is thus neglected. That duty of providing food and cloathing, with the other ordinary conveniences of life, which I have observed that every government owes to its subjects, is left undischarged. Instead of fulfilling the higher duties of advancing the nation to a state of true felicity by education, virtue and real piety, it stops short in the very threshold, by leaving them unprovided with the necessaries of life. But it sometimes happens that a nation destitute of the means of promoting agriculture, yet enjoys all the

advantages of it from the encouragement of trade, manufactures and commerce. This has been more particularly the case with Holland. The unremitting industry of its people has surmounted even the obstacles which nature has thrown in their way. In the midst of their marshes and fogs, without either soil or climate to favour them, they became a rich and powerful nation. They made even the tides stop short and the ocean give way to their industry. Without either agriculture or even manufactures of their own, they grew rich and powerful by becoming the carriers of the productions of other nations. Let us then see what is the state of manufactures and commerce in Ireland.

Excepting their linen trade, which is carried on in the North, there is scarce any other very considerable manufacture in the kingdom. And yet it has often been asserted by those esteemed competent judges of the subject, that the country is very favourable to the establishment of many others. If they could only find means to
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increase the stock of public industry, and lessen the number of the idle and indolent, they would find both their manufactures and agriculture gain incredible advantages. The connection between the two is so great, that an improvement in the one will be generally found to improve the other. The gains of the manufacturer create a market for the farmer's corn. The farmer will lay out his lands in tillage, in order that with the profits he may purchase the luxuries of life. Thus are these two employments mutually subservient to each other's advantage. The advancement of foreign trade also introduces such foreign articles as spur the industry of the farmer. Whether he works for the necessaries or the luxuries of life, the advantage to the state is equally great. But foreign commerce, as it gains ground, is more extensively beneficial; for it furnishes materials for new manufactures, enriches the finances of the state, and promotes refinement. Wherever commerce spreads her wings, there civilization is ever found to flourish. But it is perfectly unnecessary for me to be lavish
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in encomiums on a subject which in theory affords no difference of opinion, the advantages of it being allowed and admitted on all hands.

The sum total of what I have advanced may be comprised in very few words. Every government should support its people. The wealth of a state is its industry. That industry must be exercised on agriculture, manufactures, and commerce. All these three are connected with each other, and mutually improve or decline together. Agriculture is checked by a want of stock in the farmer, which arises from not having a proper interest in the soil, and security in the exclusive enjoyment of the profits derived from the improvement of it. It does not seem that the Irish government has taken sufficient pains to counteract these obstacles by giving bounties, or otherwise. Neither are those sister aids of manufactures and commerce in a sufficiently flourishing condition to exalt their fallen brother.

Without the market which trade affords, how is the farmer to pay his landlord, to pay
the

the taxes of the state, to pay his tithes to two clergymen, and then with what remains to support himself and his family? Without the assistance of agriculture, how is the manufacturer to do the same? Where little corn is grown, that little must be sold very dear; which obliges the Irish manufacturer to sell his commodity at a price proportionate to what he pays for food. Even Irish linens therefore require English bounties to find a market, or other nations would undersell them by many degrees. Thus, whilst tillage languishes and is neglected, trade is fettered, and the people are in a state of poverty and wretchedness.

Neither has the government (thus neglecting to supply the wants of the people by calling their industry into action) instituted any parochial provision for the poor throughout the kingdom, to supply the omission. It is calculated that the annual amount of the poor's rates in England is two millions. But as there would be so many calls for the benefit of this relief in Ireland, the nation would be unable to bear

bear the expences of it. It can only be established as the auxiliary of a great trade, to provide for the few hands which the labour of an industrious nation leaves without maintenance. Unless a nation is rich, it can never maintain its poor, for the poor then becomes the nation itself. The bulk of every state must support itself by its industry, for the advantages of fortune are necessarily confined to very few. When the majority maintain themselves, the minority may then expect some relief. But for a small minority to support a large majority of the population, is one of those paradoxes in politics, which the benevolence of no nation ever attempted to put in practice, or the eccentricity of any sophist to illustrate and recommend.

I am, &c. &c.

LETTER

LETTER V.

OF THE CAUSES OF THE LATE
REBELLION, &c.

MY DEAR SIR,

WHEN I first took upon myself the task of visiting Ireland, and of personally looking into the state and condition of that kingdom, I was fully apprised of the many difficulties and obstacles with which I had to encounter. I was sensible how delicate the nature of the subject was into which I was about to inquire, and how much that delicacy was increased by the times and existing circumstances. The minds of the people would be sore, and bruised almost to death with political differences, which had cost them so much pain and anxiety. I had even to apprehend that a question might give uneasiness, or be the means of exciting alarm and suspicion.

suspicion. Where every man must look with reserve and distrust on his neighbour; where experience had shewn the possibility of meeting with an enemy in the disguise of a friend or nearest inmate; I knew that to inquire would be to rankle a deep and deadly wound; and to put my own observations to the test, by communicating them to those best capable of judging of their truth and accuracy, would be engaging in a work of dangerous and uncertain hazard, and be treading over the mournful embers of half-extinguished fires*.

Since my arrival in Ireland, I have found all these apprehensions realized to their full amount. But yet the importance of the information which I was desirous of obtaining, urged me on to prosecute my inquiries with alacrity and perseverance. It is true my resolutions cost me some pain in the execution, but I considered that the spirit of inquiry ought not

* Periculosæ plenum opus aleæ
Tractas, et incedis per ignes
Suppositos cineri doloso.

to be damped by considerations of that nature. I had embarked in the cause, and was determined to prosecute my voyage to the end. As for those who might be inclined to judge severely of my conduct, I left them to take into the account, the agent, and the object of the action on which they were about to pass sentence. I found, that even in Ireland the name of an Englishman carries with it that weight and respect which has long flattered our pride in foreign countries. In Ireland, too, every man is sensible how much the prosperity and dearest interests of the two countries are linked and blended together. They are conscious, that whatever shock is received by the one, must run with electrical force and rapidity through the other. What considerations had I then to deter me from my object? I had only to look into the state of the country, and to hear the tale of those who had been witnesses and sufferers in the calamities which it had experienced.

When I first landed in Ireland, I spent
a few

a few days in Dublin, and then visited the country which had been the theatre of the late rebellion. In the capital, I observed the streets were crowded with the widows and orphans of those who had fallen in battle: In the country, I beheld the villages every where burnt and razed to the ground. Every thing I cast my eyes on, presented the melancholy features of ruin and desolation. I was resolved to make myself master of the real causes of the unhappy differences which had subsisted. I inquired of the Protestant landlord, and he told me that it was a Catholic war. I turned to the Dissenter (for such in every sense of the word he evinced himself to be), and he answered, that it was an insurrection of the peasantry against their cruel masters—that it was like the celebrated La Jacquerie of France; and that the oppression of the natural aristocracy of the country had occasioned so much bloodshed. When I resorted in the last place to the Catholic (for in Ireland the distinctions of religion mark men more than any thing else, and are the cause
of

of all other distinctions) and pressed him to inform me what he considered to be the causes and the objects of the late civil commotions, he assured me, that it was brought about entirely by the partisans of French principles. He added, that it was no war of religion; because none of the Catholics of Cork, Waterford, Limerick, Clare, Galway, or of any part of the kingdom, except those of the few counties in which the rebellion broke out, were at all implicated in it; that the Catholics of Wicklow and Wexford were necessarily so, because all the peasantry there were of that religion.

Amidst these various and contradictory opinions how was I to discover the truth? This alone I could ascertain with precision, that the whole nation was convulsed with jarring interests and irreconcilable animosities; that these were the primary causes of the rebellion; and that, whilst they subsisted, Ireland must still continue the unhappy country which I then beheld it.

The inquiry then shifted to, What are
K
these

these contending interests? what the causes of them? and what is it that has kindled them into the flame of civil war? I divided the inquiry into a political and a religious one. I hoped that this division would satisfy my curiosity, as the prism by separating a ray of light shews its component parts in their true colours. An examination into the practical merits of the government led me to a knowledge of the general state of the country. An inquiry into the religious differences of Ireland fully informed me of the condition of each particular class of its inhabitants. You have had the result of both these researches. But they only acquaint you with the primary causes of the rebellion, not with the proximate or immediate ones. I proceed therefore to develop the circumstances in the state of parties which led more directly to the rebellion.

Since the accession of his present Majesty to the throne, many attempts have been made by successive viceroys to diminish the overgrown power of the aristocracy

eracy of the country. All these however failed of effect, because they wanted the cordial co-operation of the British cabinet. Let me be bold enough to assert, that in the inevitable consequences of the existing state of parties, Great Britain hoped that Ireland would see the necessity of an union. The administrations of Lord Townshend, of the Marquis of Rockingham, and of Lord Westmoreland, successively passed away without any thing material being done. The phantoms, the shadows of royalty, they stalked across the stage to please the vanity of the Irish nation with the parade and intrigue of a Court. The presidency, however, of the latter Viceroy, Lord Westmoreland, is remarkable for giving rise to a faction called the Orange party, and to the conspiracy of the United Irishmen. In the principles upon which these two cabals were formed, and in the history of their proceedings, may be distinctly traced the immediate causes of the Irish rebellion. The Orange party was formed to perpetuate the abuses and oppressions of the go-

vernment, by discountenancing every innovation. The United Irishmen marshalled themselves on the other hand, not merely to reform all abuses (for, had they proceeded no farther, they would have merited the highest applause), but also to carry innovation to the extent of separating the country from Great Britain, and making it a free, integral and independent republic.

The narrative of the collision of these two parties till an explosion took place, may be comprised in a few words. Lord Westmoreland in a speech from the throne recommended the claims of the Catholics to be taken into immediate consideration, and the expectation of their complete emancipation ran very high. The impulse of all disinterested men was greatly in favour of the measure. The best share of the talents on both sides of the water was exerted in its behalf. Burke wrote and spoke for the Catholics; and the whole eloquence of the British House of Commons was roused in their behalf. To oppose this, the aristocracy of Ireland proceeded

ceeded to array an army of their own. They openly avowed themselves determined to shed the last drop of their blood before any concessions should be made to the Catholic body. In this opposition may be seen the origin of the Orange party.

During the whole of these proceedings in favour of the Catholics, it is obvious that the conspiracy of the United Irishmen was gradually ripening. The abuses of the government were the theme both of public and private discussion, and the hopes of their being reformed were of course great. The United Irishmen artfully fomented the discontents of the people, as an engine to effectuate their own views. They had imbibed their political opinions from the French Revolution, and were closely connected with the partisans of it, whose views of disorganization completely corresponded with their own. This threatened to prove the source of the utmost disorder to the state. The tide of republicanism in Ireland ebbed and flowed according to the success of its friends on the continent.

When the allied armies retired from the French territory in the autumn of the year 1792, it was at its highest pitch. Eternal war was declared against all Kings by the friends of Liberty. The United Irishmen marshalled their corps, and displayed the emblems of sedition in the streets and squares of Dublin, and in the full face of the noon-day. A national guard was formed upon the plan, and even with the uniform, of that of Paris. The nation was attempted to be roused by seditious publications and addresses; and Dunganon, where the volunteers of Ireland had a few years before asserted the independence of the country, was re-appointed the spot where the voice of Liberty was once more to be heard. During the whole of these proceedings the arm of the government seemed palsied, and the nation looked on, appalled spectators of the scene. The steadiness of the physician seemed overpowered by the very aspect of the disease. It appeared as if little more than the cast of a die was to determine whether Revolution

tion or Treason was to be the watch-word of Ireland.

At length, however, the government took courage; proclamations were issued forbidding armed assemblies of the people, and some of the conspirators were seized. Hamilton Rowan, their ostensible leader, was brought to trial; others fled to France; and the proceedings of the conspiracy, though not less vigorous, became however less open. They had coupled their cause with that of the Catholics; and every exertion which was made for that oppressed body was paving the way to the designs of the conspirators. They therefore endeavoured to rouse the Catholics, as the instrument by which the constitution both in church and state was to be completely overturned. But, to the honour of that great body be it recorded, the loyalty of the far greater part of them was proof against these artful machinations. The Catholics felt themselves attached to a constitution of King, Lords and Commons. They therefore renounced all coalition with the conspirators, and pre-

ferred their humble claims to Parliament, to be admitted within the pale of a constitution which they were ready to defend with their lives and fortunes.

Such was the state of parties when Lord Westmoreland was recalled, and the administration of Earl Fitzwilliam commenced. All the circumstances relating to that event are, however, so fresh in the recollection of every man, that it would be abusing your patience if I were to attempt to recapitulate them. Suffice it to say, that the sudden recall of that amiable nobleman, at the moment when the expectations of Catholic emancipation were at their full height, and made the avowed object of his administration, contributed not a little to bring the affairs of Ireland to a speedy crisis. Nothing could have happened more opportune to the United Irishmen. If we are only to consider this recall as the precursor of that desolating civil war which ravaged Ireland, it is undoubtedly much to be lamented. But if, on the contrary, we contemplate it as one of those measures which

which was to prepare the kingdom for a full and final settlement of its political and religious interests (although that object was not at the time sufficiently ripe for avowal), it seems to me that the wisdom and necessity of it cannot but be acquiesced in.

The conspiracy of the United Irishmen, notwithstanding the obstacles it had met with, had now however become ripe for explosion, and the virtuous Lord Camden's administration was to be the unhappy epoch of it. At the head of this plot was an 'Executive Directory,' under the controul and superintendence of which were 'Provincial and Baronial Committees,' scattered over the greater part of the country. They had their 'affiliated societies' in different parts of the three kingdoms, with which, and with the government of France, they kept up a regular and frequent correspondence. The train was laid throughout England, Scotland and Ireland; but fortunately the explosion only took place in the latter country.

Seditious harangues and publications
have

have been called by Lord Verulam the
 sister of rebellion ; and the observation is
 founded in human nature, and confirmed
 by uniform experience. ‘ The poets there-
 fore (says this great man) fabled Fame,
 ‘ or that swift plague Rumour *, to be the
 ‘ youngest *sister* of the giants who warred
 ‘ against God †. For rebellious actions
 ‘ and seditious reports do not differ in na-
 ‘ ture or kind, but as it were *only in sex* ;
 ‘ the one being masculine and the other
 ‘ feminine.’ Whoever examines the rise
 and progress of the society of the United
 Irishmen will not require any further con-
 firmation of the truth of what I have before
 asserted. Whoever reads the addresses and
 declarations, which the press was daily teem-
 ing with, cannot doubt that the United
 Irishmen were the fomenters and the insti-
 gators of the rebellion. They poured forth

* *Fama Malum* quo non aliud velocius ullum.

† *Illam Terra parens, ira irritata deorum,
 Extremam, ut perhibent, Cæo Enceladoque
 sororem
 Progeniuit*——

the distresses of the people, and taught them to be discontented with the existing government of the country. But this lesson had been long fully learnt. The society declared, that 'Universal Emancipation, with a Representative Legislature,' was their 'polar principle.' The King and the House of Peers, together with the ecclesiastical establishment, were therefore left to their fate. In the bombastic jargon of French Republicanism, they invited a 'compact' of Presbyterian and Catholic; that 'provincial conventions' should assemble, and elect 'delegates' to confer with those chosen by Protestant bodies of a 'similar nature and organization.' They avowed that nothing would satisfy them but 'immediate, ample and substantial justice to the Catholics;' but they declared at the same time they considered *that* merely as the 'portal to the temple of National Freedom*.'

Unfor-

* See the Address of the Society of United Irishmen at Dublin, to the Volunteers of Ireland, signed
by

Unfortunately for Ireland, the Catholics of some few counties listened to these artful invitations; but the Presbyterian interest stood aloof, and refused its co-operation.

The unhappy peasantry of Wicklow, Wexford and the adjoining counties, groaning under the weight of their oppressions—misled by the artifices of their own priests—flattered with the assurance of repossessing those estates of which their ancestors had formerly been plundered—and assured that they would enjoy them again under the protection of a ‘Catholic Republic’—listened to the delusion, and promised their warm co-operation. The names of many great men were made use of to encourage them by their examples; some of whom in fact secretly abetted all these proceedings. Great assistance was promised from the French, if it should be necessary; and the

by Archibald Hamilton Rowan, as Secretary, and fully proved on his trial. Also the other papers annexed to the Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords in Ireland—August 1798.

landing which at that time had been recently effected by some troops of that nation at Bantry-Bay, served to countenance the delusion. But all this would have been insufficient to bring the Catholics into the field, if it had not been industriously circulated by the United Irishmen, that the Orange party was instituted in order to exterminate them. It was represented, that the Protestants had entered into a 'solemn league and covenant to destroy 'them, and that they had sworn to wade 'up to their knees in Popish blood*.' The day when the massacre was to commence was even mentioned. This artful insinuation and most ingenious device completed the momentum of disaffection which before there was little to restrain: this artifice brought the Catholic peasantry into the field at the time fixed on by the conspiracy for a general rising.

I am sorry to be obliged to confess, that

* See the Report of the Committee of the House of Lords. The truth of this fact I had many opportunities of ascertaining.

there

there was but too much appearance of reason to justify the Catholics in giving ear to this suggestion of a massacre. Orange lodges were spread over the counties in which the rebellion broke out, more numerously than through the other parts of the kingdom. Oaths were administered to those who enrolled themselves of that party; the nature and purport of which the peasantry were unacquainted with, but which they were led to believe were for the design of exterminating them. Neither is there any doubt but that such a wish has been professed by many of the Orange party. I am sure I have heard it declared, and so must every man who has at all mixed in society in the country, that Ireland would never be at rest till the Catholics were completely exterminated. Such a design has even been avowed in their public deliberations. I have not indeed heard it myself, but I have not the least doubt of the fact. The charge has been made by others, and has never yet been denied.

The

The author of a highly respectable publication, on the state of public affairs in Ireland in the year 1799*, has this remarkable passage: ‘ And though there may
 ‘ be men of ferocious minds who would
 ‘ exterminate the natives; though I have
 ‘ heard an atrocious policy avowed in the
 ‘ public councils, by which they were to
 ‘ be armed and let loose upon each other;
 ‘ though I have heard the offer of Union
 ‘ condemned as a remedy inadequate to
 ‘ the evil, and the salvation of the few
 ‘ asserted to depend upon the extermina-
 ‘ tion of the majority; that the Catholics
 ‘ must be extinguished and put out; that
 ‘ not a single Rohilla of them all can be left
 ‘ with impunity; though *I have heard these*
 ‘ *sanguinary doctrines pollute the walls of a*
 ‘ *House of Parliament*, yet I am satisfied
 ‘ that they are confined to a few breasts not
 ‘ wickeder than they are weak.’

What answer does the Orange party make to this charge, which stands upon

* Considerations on the State of Public Affairs in the year 1799. Ireland.

record?

record? They refuse to plead to the indictment; they stand obstinately mute: their guilt must therefore be taken *pro confesso*. The inference is, that the miserable peasantry, in giving credit to the assertion of a massacre, acted upon good collateral evidence, which, when added to the positive proof (for such it must have appeared to them) which *forged* Orange oaths purporting a massacre, produced, must entirely acquit them of every crime. It must reduce their conduct to an exertion of the mere right of self-defence; that right which no law can take away, because it is paramount to all law; that right which no aristocracy can overthrow, because it has for its basis human nature: "*Est enim hæc, non scripta, sed nata lex: quam non didicimus, accepimus, legimus, verum ex natura ipsa arripimus, hausimus, expressimus, ad quam non docti sed facti, non instituti sed imbuti, sumus.*"

This is a 'round unvarnished tale' of the circumstances which led to the Irish rebellion. In that unhappy contest, brothers
were

were armed against each others' lives, and children against those of their parents. Ireland will long feel the effects of it—*Crudum adhuc vulnus medentium manus reformidat.* Peace was however at length purchased (if indeed that dreadful scene which slaughter and desolation produce deserves the name of peace); it was purchased with little less than the loss of one hundred thousand lives. Of these about nine-tenths were of the insurgents; the loss of the royalists being about 10,000 men.

After the great victories which were gained at Vinegar-Hill and some other places, the triumphs of the Orange party were now complete. The hue and cry of Popish plot and Catholic rebellion was immediately vociferated. Not even the high-church mobs in the time of Sacheverel could have exceeded their religious zeal. It betrayed them into excesses which generous enemies would have been ashamed of. It was like Philip of Macedon dancing on the field of battle, and insulting the dead bodies of his enemies, after his victory at Cheronæa. They talked

of a restoration of the whole of the black code of penal laws which had ever been enacted against Popery. The statute book was again to be disgraced and branded with those stains which for some years the legislature had been gradually purging it of. Popish recusant convicts were to be again introduced to the acquaintance of English law, after it had disowned any longer knowledge of them *, and the exercise of the Roman Catholic religious worship was to be prohibited by severe penalties and punishments. Fresh life was to be given to laws which had become dead letters, and fresh heaps were to be piled on those which already existed, ‘ *Immensus aliarum super alias acervarum legum cumulus.*’

But I trust you will feel convinced, that the stigma cast on the Roman Catholics was unmerited and unjust ; that there is neither any thing now existing in the nature of that persuasion, or in the dispositions of its professors, which ought to check that

* The Popish religion is now unknown to our law, per Lord Kenyon. Peake's N. P. 79.

spirit of liberality and humane toleration which has honoured the reign of his present Majesty, and which is every day gaining ground in Europe. It is pleasing to compare that mild spirit of philosophy which has adorned the present reign, with the harshness and severity which cast a melancholy gloom over some of the most brilliant periods of British history. I do not plead the cause of Superstition, or of its nursery and hot-bed, the Church of Rome. I am in this particular at least the advocate of human nature. It is to assist in overturning superstition that I have thrown a feeble lance; for the readiest road to this object appears to be the abolition of all those opprobrious distinctions, which are the very batteries and bulwarks of intolercancy.

The Irish rebellion did not originate in religious differences, however they might contribute to inflame it in its progress. The earthly passions of malice and ambition were undoubtedly heightened by the flame of theological discord; but they were not created by it. They were created

by those oppressions under which I have described the peasantry as existing. Upon a populace with minds so desirous of innovation, not merely for the sake of innovation, but of relief from their miseries, the principles of Jacobin Liberty and religious zeal must have acted with a powerful purchase. *The Catholics became therefore the tools, and the Society of United Irishmen were the busy workmen of the rebellion.* Priests and traitors kindled the spirit of bloody and implacable hostility, by blowing the trumpet and lighting the firebrand of religious war. In all times and almost in all countries, Christianity has been made the fulcrum by which the quiet of the world has been disturbed. In this case, it is probable that the motives of these priests and of these traitors were different from each other. I will venture to assert, that the motives of the multitude differed alike from both. They all co-operated in one common design of overthrowing the government; but success would have soon thrown asunder such ill-jointed materials.

It

It is well known that the Catholics would have soon shaken off their connection with the apostles of French freedom. But the fortune of the kingdom prevented our witnessing the horrid scenes which must have followed their success. They both sunk together in one gulph; they both fell sacrifices to 'the fire-eyed maid of smoky war.' May the nation learn to avoid a repetition of these horrors! May they learn the important lesson of removing those grievances which must again lead to them! It is the melancholy task of the historian to paint the scene; it is the business of a legislature to profit by the event. Posterity demands that the hard-earned lessons of experience should not be thrown away. Posterity requires that the cause of knowledge, truth and justice should every day advance, for upon that advancement must depend the happiness of mankind, both moral and political.

I am, &c. &c.

It is well known that the Catholics would have soon shaken off their connection with the apostles of French freedom. But the fortune of the kingdom prevented this, winning the royal banner which had followed their leaders. They had then together in one camp; they had all faith in the five-eyed might of the French war. May the nation have to avoid a repetition of these horrors? May they test the important issue of removing those grievances which had again led to them? Is the melancholy tale of the children to paint the scene? It is the business of a legislature to give to the system of poverty demands, that the hard-pressed labour of exchequer should not be thrown away. Poverty requires that the code of knowledge, and justice should every day advance. For upon the advancement and decay of the happiness of mankind, both moral and political.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

ON THE CONSTITUTION OF 1782.

MY DEAR SIR,

IT has often happened that the principle upon which either an individual or a nation acts may be good, when the measure adopted in consequence of it is far from deserving the same commendation. I consider this to have been precisely the case with the Irish nation in the year 1782. It had long laboured under the grievance of being bound by laws in the making of which it had no share, and of being crippled in the passing of those which its own internal legislature deemed necessary. Great Britain had always considered the country as a dependant and subordinate kingdom, which it had conquered, planted and civilized; and which of course could have no

farther claims than to the clemency of the victor; for not even the Roman arms had ever penetrated into it to carry civilization with slavery. It had therefore never thought of communicating as its right, all the advantages of that free government and sovereign legislative authority which Great Britain herself was in the enjoyment of.

Molyneux, the friend of Locke, had in vain stood forward in the behalf of his unhappy country. The excess of his zeal was perhaps the occasion of his ill-success. He participated in that ardent love of freedom which pervaded his English contemporaries, which had reared the fabric of their liberties, and brought about a declaration of their rights. The writings of Locke had perhaps fixed the political opinions of his friend, and determined in his own mind the line of conduct which he should pursue. He boldly advocated the cause of Ireland, denied the right of conquest which Great Britain claimed over it, and

and demanded for his country a full share of British freedom *. But his enthusiasm was cried down as the effect of madness, and his writings were condemned to be burnt by the hands of the common hangman.

The period was not yet arrived in which claims of this sort could be successfully made. Another century was to revolve over the heads of the Irish, another generation was to pass away, before they could be heard with effect. In the New World, the spirit of Independance first awoke from her long trance. The genius of Liberty, after establishing the freedom of her hardy sons in that remote quarter of the globe, traversed the Atlantic Ocean and winged her flight towards Europe. She first alighted upon the shores of Ireland. The influence of that visit ran through the country with electrical rapidity. Ireland was instantly in a flame. As if by the force of magic, forty thousand men suddenly de-

* See his book entitled 'The Case of Ireland.'

clared themselves the champions of the liberties of their country. The exigencies of the times had armed these volunteer patriots, and there was no refusing claims which were backed by such irresistible power. They had associated to protect their country from invasion, and they now turned their swords against the very government which they had apparently embodied themselves to protect. The unfortunate administration of Lord North had not sufficient force or courage to withstand the torrent. By the declaration of independence, which therefore soon followed, Ireland was reluctantly torn from the bosom of the mother country.

I need not inform you, that by the act which was passed in the twenty-third of his present Majesty's reign, it was expressly declared, that the people of Ireland should in all cases whatsoever be bound only by laws enacted by his Majesty and the Parliament of that kingdom. Two years before, all pretensions to superiority founded on the statute law had been abandoned.

doned. But prior to that period Ireland was bound (when named) by acts of the British Parliament. As a dependant subordinate kingdom, their Parliament was also incompetent to pass laws without sending over to England the heads and titles of them, to undergo the consideration of the English Privy Council. It was even necessary to certify the causes and considerations of holding a Parliament, before it could lawfully be convened.

Appeals also lay to England from the decisions made by their Courts of Law and Equity. From the Court of King's Bench in Ireland, the appeal was to the King's Bench in England; and from the Court of Chancery there to the British House of Lords. For England may be said to have formed its own government and laws, like the silk-worm, out of its own bowels, and to have spread the web which it had spun over the sister kingdom. It had neither begged nor borrowed like other nations from the codes of Greece or Rome.

Ireland

Ireland enjoyed though not the honour yet many of the advantages of this happy genius. The government of the country, though alien to it, was yet a British government. The laws, though they were of English growth and exportation, were yet famed for their wisdom and mildness. They had been planted by King John, or according to others by his father, Henry the Second, at the Council of Lismore; and the Irish nation had publicly sworn to obey them. Their lawyers were all educated (as they still continue to be) in our schools of jurisprudence and fountains of municipal law—the Inns of Court. A resort to these original sources, in the form of a British appellate jurisdiction, was therefore wise and commendable. But independent of its propriety on these grounds, it was highly necessary for the preservation of that sovereign power and interest which Great Britain claimed over Ireland. Supreme judicial and legislative powers are inseparably connected together. Such was the

the state of the kingdom: but all existing provisions for the government of the country were swept away by the act of independance. They even consented to forego the substantial advantages of the learning and impartiality of English Judges and a British House of Lords, whilst they grasped at the vain shadow and empty titles of Liberty and Independance.

But after what has been said in the preceding letters, (I fear somewhat drily and unentertainingly,) I must leave you to determine whether that independance was the measure most fitted to promote the happiness of the country. I grant that much was to be done, but I contend that a false remedy was too hastily adopted. That remedy was totally inadequate to the extent of the evil. It induced the necessity of adopting only half measures for the relief of the nation. An aristocracy was seated on the kingdom, whose minds were averse and whose interests were opposite to those of the bulk of the people. This government was reduced to the disagreeable
alternative

alternative of either disregarding its own existence and preservation, or else of leaving the oppressions of the people unremedied. If it removed the disabilities under which the great mass of the people, the Catholic and Presbyterian bodies, lay, and admitted them to a full share of the benefits of a free government, it was feared that the Protestant ascendancy would be highly endangered. They had even to apprehend that his Majesty's crown might be voted off his head. The Protestant interest would be merged and lost in the torrent with which the opening such flood-gates would immediately overwhelm them. If then on the other hand its just fears prevailed, all the abuses of the old state of things must continue. They might indeed have adopted a courageous wisdom, and admitted all ranks of people to the full benefit of this boasted constitution. But instead of doing this, they had recourse to a 'false reptile prudence, the result not of caution but of fear. They sought for a refuge from their

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fears,

fears, in their fears themselves. They considered a temporizing meanness as the only source of safety. Instead of building the safety of the government upon the interests, the wishes and the respect of the people, they compromised and truckled with the power which they dreaded, as the only means of drawing out their puny existence *.

These observations will be found applicable to all the measures which the Irish legislature have adopted. The concessions which have been wrested from them in favour of the Catholics, have obliged the Protestants to join their interest with that of the Dissenters, in order to preserve the balance of power. But yet they have never dared to allow a representation of the Catholic body by members of their own religious faith, being conscious that the Protestant power, even in its combined state, would weigh but as dust in the scale against such representatives. They have therefore endeavoured to make their peace with the Ca-

* Burke.

tholics,

tholics, by building and endowing a royal college for the education of their clergy, and with other baubles of the same nature. Still therefore the ascendancy of one party is maintained by the degradation of the other: still those ancient animosities, irreconcilable antipathies, feuds and rival interests, are perpetuated, which so often have hurried the kingdom into anarchy and confusion.

Neither has much more been done to improve the industry and commerce of the kingdom. Soon after the act of independence, the British Parliament offered certain terms upon which the commercial interests of the two kingdoms should be mutually adjusted. Every thing was offered which was thought at that time at all consistent with the interests of the mother country. But because Great Britain would not assign over to this independant kingdom all its own commercial advantages, the Parliament of Ireland rejected the proposals altogether. The mistress of the seas was to grant them every thing, or
they

they would accept of nothing. They refused all restricted right of trading, even such as should only pay a due regard to the charter of our East India Company. It was also considered by the framers of these propositions, that some compensation was justly due for admitting them to any participation of commerce. An annual contribution was therefore required to be paid, in order to make some amends for the loss to the revenue of the country, which would be sustained by a diminution of the duties paid to the English Government. But they rejected the mention of this proposal with contempt and indignation as a public insult. The other propositions shared the same fate. But the Parliament, in order to amuse the people, and make them some amends for the want of trade and commerce, erected a magnificent Custom-house and Exchange for their merchants. Thus have they continued steadfastly to adhere to the old maxim of sacrificing the real interests of the country to that popular

vanity which so much characterises the nation.

As for the government itself, it soon degenerated, even in its own principles. The state of the people is a sufficient mirror of its merits ; but we have seen its defects by a more minute and analytical examination. By the anatomy of the component parts, we have seen how unjointed are the members of this body politic. But though the Parliament has not been able or willing to bestow on the people the blessings of a free constitution, yet they have erected a Parliament-house, which for splendour has perhaps no equal in the world. They seem to have been sensible that their existence could not be long, and therefore took an early opportunity of committing to carpenters and masons the task of writing their history.

Such is the hasty survey which I have made of this much talked of constitution of 1782. It appeared like a vessel with gilded beams and painted oars, and purple sails, with her flags, pendants and streamers floating in the air, but only fit for smooth waters

waters and favourable winds. Whilst these continued—whilst the public mind and public strength were united—the vessel sailed well and made a splendid appearance. But no sooner did the winds arise, the waves foam and the tempest howl, than it was lost and wrecked almost in its very launch.

I have thus, you see, taken some pains to describe to you the birth and acts of this independent legislature. In discharging this task, I have briefly laid open the effects which have attended it. Two consequences, however, may yet be distinctly traced from this glorious assertion of Irish liberty. It confirmed the authority of the aristocracy over the people, delivering them up as slaves to a planter, *to use or to abuse them*. Interest or inclination were left without an appellate jurisdiction, as the sole principles which should regulate its conduct. Its first effect therefore was to fix firmly the *old state of things*, with all the abuses and oppressions with which that state was accompanied.

Its other effect was to occasion the most enormous increase of bribery and corruption, in order to enable the executive government to maintain its just station. His Majesty's Councils can have no farther weight than what they receive from a system of corruption co-extensive with the independence with which the legislative bodies are invested. Hence it was that their Viceroys have been obliged to stain the honour of the purple, by submitting to numerous indignities. Hence it was that they have been often obliged to create new places to provide for the *friends to Government*, and to lay on taxes, with the produce of which their clamorous cravings might be satisfied. Voters in Parliament must be paid; or, if they could not be bought sufficiently cheap, new seats must be purchased for those who were wanted to make up the complement of ministerial force. Hence it was that Lord Westmoreland, in order to raise money, put up peerages to public auction. Other shifts
and

and artifices have been devised in order to support this system of corruption, till at length it has exceeded all bounds. It has now indeed passed beyond the Rubicon. Some fresh remedy is called for, and that can only be found in a legislative union with Great Britain. In my following and concluding letter, I shall endeavour to give some method to my thoughts upon that important measure.

I am, &c. &c.

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LETTER

LETTER VII.

ON THE LEGISLATIVE UNION WITH
GREAT BRITAIN.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOU have remarked in your answer to my last letter, and I think your observation most just, that the present is an age of innovation, big with portentous changes and events of an extraordinary nature. It is indeed so; but whether for the eventual benefit of mankind or not, is a problem too deep for our philosophy. The solution of that question must be left to an all-wise, though mysterious Providence. It is our part alone to profit by what is passing before our eyes. Indeed it seems to me, that the man who can look tamely on, an unconcerned spectator of the scene which is acting before his eyes, must possess that torpid listlessness of mind which seldom falls to the lot of human nature.

There cannot be any excuse for such neglect. There is not any pretext for an individual's thus collecting and folding himself up, as it were within a circle, with his own private interests and pursuits in the centre. He is rather called upon to consider himself as a link of that great chain which holds together society, and the order of the universe. Remove that link, and the chain becomes broken and imperfect. In the close and compact union of the component parts of every system, its safety, order and harmony will be found to consist.

It is true, that the storm which so lately agitated the political horizon has somewhat abated. We are a little more composed, at least in the North of Europe. We are left at liberty, after the great danger is over, to contemplate the ravages of the tempest, and devise means for our future security.

We may see that it has shaken old Europe to her lowest foundation. The States of Holland, France and Italy have been swallowed up in the earthquake, and

the shock has vibrated to the very heart of
Great Britain and Ireland,

— Jam Deiphobi dedit ampla ruinam
Volcano superante domus: jam proxumus ardet
Ucalegon,

You who have remained quietly at home under the protecting ægis of a British Government, have not felt those severe convulsions which have laid waste other kingdoms. England, like a tortoise in its shell, as Livy has somewhere remarked of Peloponnesus, found a safe defence in that angry sea which surrounds her on all sides. The storm indeed stood suspended over your heads, and ready to burst upon you. But at last it blew over, and poured its destructive fury upon Ireland. It has desolated this unhappy country, and laid waste its richest and most flourishing provinces. Not even the soft myrtle has escaped the sulphurous bolt which split the ‘unwedgeable and gnarled oak.’ The aged and the infirm, the young and the defenceless, perished in one common ruin. Mothers in vain pressed their infants to their breasts
for

for protection. All fell in one undistinguishable scene of human carnage. I have visited that unfortunate kingdom, which for an hundred miles in length is one continued vista of smoking ruins and desolation:

————— ‘ Alas poor country !

‘ *Almost afraid to know itself !* It cannot
 ‘ Be call’d a mother, but a grave : where nothing
 ‘ But who knows nothing is once seen to smile :
 ‘ Where sighs and groans, and shrieks that rend the air,
 ‘ *Are made, not mark’d ;* where violent sorrow seems
 ‘ A modern ecstasy : *the dead man’s knell*
 ‘ *Is there scarce ask’d for whom :* and good men’s lives
 ‘ Expire before the flowers in their caps,
 ‘ Dying or ere they sicken.’

And now, whilst the kingdom is impressed with a lively sense of these miseries, whilst the embers of the late commotions are still warm, and whilst it is still smarting under the green soreness of its intestine divisions ; a Legislative Union with Great Britain is proposed. The mother country opens out her arms to embrace and relieve the child which had deserted her.

I promised to give you my sentiments on
 this

this subject. I cannot preface them by any other remark than that the advantages of the proposal appear to me so manifest and obvious, that I cannot for a moment conceive that any thing but the most absurd national pride which distinguishes this people, or the perhaps still more irremoveable sense of private interest influencing the aristocracy of the country in opposition to the public good, should induce a moment's hesitation in accepting such an offer. I know that these two principles will do much, but, I hope, not every thing. I am confident that interest and vanity will create many obstacles in the way of the Union, but I hope that they will not altogether prevent its completion.

I trust that the letters which I have written from this country, have not left you altogether ignorant of the causes which lead to the Union. It has been my object to give some faint delineation of them. I know that it is a melancholy picture which I have sketched, but I hope it is not altogether an unfaithful one. It has been to me a painful duty which I owed to truth
and

and justice, to declare my opinion that the government is nothing but a painted and gilded tyranny; the established religion an hard and stern intolerance. I know that they are arrayed in an unsuited magnificence, and covered over with the imposing robes of independence and freedom. But I have torn away the mask, to discover the real features. I have shewn the nation divided into two parties, which, though they have some features running through the whole, are yet in most particulars as different as nations which go by different names. It must by this time be obvious to you, that the government wants all those balances and counterpoises which serve to fix the state, to give it a steady direction, and to furnish sure correctives to any violent spirit that might at any time prevail;—that it is founded upon the successful violence of a proscribing, confiscating, plundering, ferocious and tyrannical aristocracy;—that the lower class of people exhibit the most shocking and disgusting spectacle of mendicancy ever beheld;—that religion, instead of drawing closer the

links

links of the great chain of creation—instead of connecting man with man, and man with God—has proved the source of such miseries to Ireland, that, if Lucretius could have lived to see its effects, he would indeed have had some more reason for exclaiming with astonishment—

Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum ?

I would fain be informed by those gentlemen who are such staunch friends to the independence of Ireland, what are the substantial benefits which have been gained by that independence? It was wrested and usurped from England in a moment of weakness and danger. In that storm in which Ireland deserted us, we lost America, 'the brightest star in our political orrery.' I have always thought the advantages which even America gained by her independence were of a doubtful complexion. I am very much inclined to suspect that liberty as delusive, which does not carry peace and plenty and prosperity in its train, and which does not command for its subjects the respect of foreign powers. But the

the Irish constitution of 1782 has not to my judgment the least evidence to bring forward in support of its character and merits. I would ask its friends, whether it did not confirm instead of remove the tyrannic rule of a despotic junto?—whether, when this growing branch was torn from the parent stock, the vicious system of its internal policy was removed?—whether that same misery which drove hundreds of the famished peasantry to America, by the efforts of whose despair the revolt of the colonies proved successful, does not still continue a living monument of the defects of the government?

If these things have indeed been all done, I should then become the sworn foe to an Union, which might injure, but could not improve, the kingdom. But knowing that the fact is otherwise, and that the great desertion from the country, even by its own landholders (who live in England, where they know that both their lives and property are secure, which in Ireland are not so, and who draw after them, out of

the kingdom, perhaps a moiety, certainly a third of its annual rent)—knowing, I say, that this emigration is the greatest proof which can be had of the inefficacy of this independence towards insuring the prosperity of Ireland; I cannot but concur most heartily in support of the Union.

Let us trace those leading effects which must obviously follow this grand measure. The aristocracy of the country, which has so long oppressed the people, will be removed. It has grown into manhood by means which have perpetually entailed on it the public detestation. The system of confiscation by which it has been fed, has indeed been too much resorted to. It is a system which much eloquence has been exerted in the defence of, but which can never rescue itself from the charge both of impolicy and inhumanity. Instead of destroying the means of future disturbances and plucking them up by the roots, it makes enmities permanent, hereditary and irremoveable. The causes and sources of civil war are perpetuated. *‘ Nunquam
bellorum*

bellorum civilium semen et causa deerit, dum homines perdit hastam illam cruentam et meminerint et sperabunt — talibus enim præmiis propositis nunquam defutura bella civilia. That principle which Thucydides laments the effects of in Greece, which the Latin historians deplored in their own time, and Machiavel many ages after in the republic of Florence, is still a salient living spring of misfortunes to Ireland.

The poorest of the people are neither so ignorant as not to know that the punishments of their ancestors are entailed on their posterity, or so unfeeling as not to smart under a sense of such injustice. From father to son is transmitted a knowledge of the estates which the family was formerly possessed of. Each child, like a young Hannibal, seems sworn to die or to recover them. To resist this unextinguishable spirit of enmity, it is necessary to refuse them all share in the government. A local aristocracy is *obliged* to oppress them. But an Union will safely afford the means of redressing these long-established grievances.

‘ *Hic*

* *Hic murus abeneus esto.* The benefits of the constitution of Great Britain will be communicated to the poorest cabin in Ireland. The people will emerge from their slavery into the dignity of a free nation. That government, the endeavour to overturn which has cost them so many rebellions and massacres, will depart in peace. Harmony will be restored to the kingdom, if indeed it ever was in possession of it. This grand object, the most desirable of all others, will at least be certainly attained: the pyramid of the British Constitution will be fixed upon its broad and firm basis in the (then no longer) sister kingdom.

2. The effects of an Union on the government are connected with those which it will have on the religious differences of the country. I do confess, that I look forward to the most important advantages in this point of view. I not only trust that it will forward the cause of universal toleration, but that it will add material improvements to the British Constitution. True Christianity will be enjoyed as a blessing,

and as that mild and humble religion which it originally was sent from heaven. Even the interests of its different sects will be preserved, without the tyranny of any one, or the oppression of the others. That influx of Catholic power, which under the Constitution of 1782 would be subversive of the Protestant interest, will by an Union be attended with no danger of that sort. It will add to our balance of civil power a *balance of religious interests*, and our government of check and controul will be thereby perfected and completed. I trust that by it the tripod of the Constitution will stand upon a still more firm fixed and immoveable basis than even it now does. Government and Religion ought to coincide in a tendency to make good citizens. In Ireland they do not. When the tendency of religion in the least deviates from the end of making good subjects; the tendency of the government towards that object ought to be strengthened. The cause of the Union may be rested upon that argument alone. In that single point

of view I think all men will agree in its expediency.

3. Its advantages to the wealth of the country cannot from their nature be made the subject of computation, but the most sanguine expectations may well be indulged on that head. It is certain that agriculture will be much benefited. Those means by which England has raised the state of its agriculture to the height and perfection which it now enjoys, will by an Union be communicated to Ireland. The legislative encouragements of the one country will be extended to the other; and I augur the most happy effects from them. I figure to myself thousands of the poor of Ireland receiving employment and food from the increase of tillage lands. By increasing the stock of industry in this channel alone, the wealth and happiness of the people and the power and finances of the government will be greatly improved. But when we come to add the weight of British capital and foreign trade into the scale, the effects seem to be most extensively beneficial.

neficial. Their commerce will receive animation; and, instead of thousands of Irish subjects emigrating yearly from their country, we shall see British subjects settling in Ireland to enjoy the advantages of her ports and havens.

Foreign trade can alone create opulent mercantile communities and corporations. The example of England has shewn the advantages which these produce both to the cause of liberty and of civilization. They alone can check and controul the encroachments and oppressions of the government. They alone can form a balance against that aristocracy which the landed interest of every nation has a natural tendency to produce. Foreign trade, by establishing powerful mercantile corporations, creates a rival influence to the wealth and power of the nobility. The Commons of England have by these means risen into notice, and gradually formed themselves into the most considerable branch of the legislature.

It is a mistaken and Machiavelian policy upon which the Irish government has been
hitherto

hitherto permitted to proceed. It has been conceived that those superfluous hands which Great Britain employs in foreign trade, are in Ireland made subservient to the greatness of the state, by affording an inexhaustible supply to our fleets and armies. But nothing is so easy as to prove that this policy is not only violent and barbarous; but even erroneous and absurd. The more labour is employed beyond the mere necessities of life, the more powerful is the state; since the persons engaged in that labour may be easily converted to the public service. By imposing a tax, the people are obliged to retrench in some of those superfluities which they can best dispense with. Those whose labour has been employed about these luxuries must either enlist in the troops, or, by turning themselves to agriculture, thereby oblige some labourers to enlist for want of business*.

Thus does a sovereign raise an army or man a fleet. By this principle, the lasting happiness of the subject is not sacrificed to

* Hume's Essay on Commerce,

the mere temporary greatness of the state, but made to coincide with it. Governments not only find their interests promoted by these means, but must invariably discover that their real strength altogether depends on them. Commerce, which affords subsistence to great numbers of subjects, thereby increases the population of the country, and the wealth of the revenues. When I have considered these things, I have been at a loss to discover how the real interests of Ireland could have been so long unattended to. I have wondered how that Spartan policy of building the greatness of the state on the poverty of the people could have been so long practised by a great commercial nation. Those brave troops who have recruited our armies from Ireland, would, if commerce had been extended over it, have been doubled in their numbers by that increase of the population which must have ensued, because invariably the effect of this policy.

One considerable effect which must also ensue from these means, if by an Union they
are

are carried into execution, will be the lowering the interest of money in Ireland *. There is no greater proof of the poverty of a nation than the high rate of interest. But the increase of industry and commerce will remove the circumstances from which high interest for the loan of money is invariably found to proceed. They will lessen the demand for borrowing, and they will afford greater riches to supply that demand. Plenty is always found to diminish the value of money.

There is no truer maxim of policy than that to make a people richer is the way to make subjects happier, and the state more powerful. If the Union therefore is to be considered as an alliance of property, a marriage '*cum pondere et libris*,' in which the value of the dowry is alone to be looked to; it is impossible that the objection can be on the part of Ireland. A wealthy suitor offers his hand, and all the inducements of riches operate in a ten-fold degree. Ireland is miserably poor;

* They pay six per cent.

thousands living in a state without industry must necessarily exhaust it. Russia has emerged from barbarity in proportion as commerce has extended itself there. The same effects must arise from similar causes in Ireland. An alliance of the richest and most commercial country in Europe, with one that is perhaps without exception the poorest, must raise its prosperity to a level with the height of that of the superior state with which it unites.

4. I trust that the history of Irish rebellions will also by this measure receive a final period. The oppressions of government will be removed, the progress of Jacobinism checked, and the prejudices of religion eradicated by the slow but certain progress of civilization. '*Le Commerce* (says Montesquieu) *guérit des préjugés destructeurs.*' When an enlightened method of considering religion is introduced and ordained by the state, no man will be persecuted for his scruples of conscience. Peace and brotherly love will be restored to a country which for many centuries at least
has

has been a stranger to it, and amidst this smiling scene of general joy and happiness—

—————“ Every man shall eat in safety
Under his own vine what he plants, and sing
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours.”

A Legislative Union recommended by such important advantages to Ireland, I think, cannot require any farther argument in support of it. As far as my own observation and experience in the country go, the benefits which I have enumerated must ensue. Great Britain will also receive her proportionate share in the common prosperity: *Neque suæ solum auxilium petit salutis, sed conjunctim.* An Union, whilst it promises to Ireland the solid benefits of law and policy, of trade and manufacture, of arts and sciences, will, by the accession of strength, render Great Britain equal to the weight of a powerful empire, and of the contests in which it may be engaged. It will raise a powerful colossus, which, resting one foot upon the Irish shore, and the other upon British soil, whilst it be-

strides

strides the intermediate channel, shall strike terror into our enemies, and be fully able to cope with that 'tremendous spectre which has stalked out of the tomb of the murdered monarchy of France*.' It will enforce our just claims to be considered the mediators and arbiters of Europe.

I confess that I have long looked upon the present government of the two kingdoms as a sort of double-headed monster. It is such a political Cerberus as history, whether civil or natural, never described. It is only fit to adorn the museum of a virtuoso, or one of the pigeon-holes of the Abbé Sieyès. If the interests of the two kingdoms have (as is universally agreed) been long united, I assert that it is impossible for that community of interests to be well governed by councils separate and independent of each other. This partnership of property should be directed by an authority wholly entire and undivided. I would allow it as many faces as Janus, as many eyes as Argus, and as many hands as Briareus; but

* Burke.

it should only be directed by one head. Hitherto we have had in Ireland an unwieldy and ill-constructed and then a wounded and crippled body to drag after rather than to aid us. We cannot both prosper unless inspired by the virtue, guided by the wisdom, and commanded by the word, of one legislature. I had rather that a common superior should be chosen by the neighing of horses, or the casting of lots, than that we should remain thus divided.

A multiplicity of councils must produce confusion. Instead of affording peace, unanimity and happiness, they will be attended with discord and misery. As we sometimes see coupled dogs, they will be pulling different ways.

Experience has demonstrated the advantages of the union of states, considered as an abstract question. The Romans gained the world by union amongst themselves and with other nations. Their enemies lost their liberties by divisions amongst themselves and with each other. Wherever the Roman soldier conquered, he made
friends

friends and citizens for his country. I will not urge the union of the Provinces of Holland against Philip the Second, or of the States of America against George the Third. They have been sufficiently commented upon, together with the more remote examples from our history, of the Heptarchy, of our Union with Wales, and lastly of that with Scotland. We shall find that the same principle has been invariably attended with similar advantages both in ancient and modern history. Had it been still more consulted, the page of history would not be so full of the miseries of nations. Switzerland would now have been in possession of its liberty, if the Cantons had been firmly united. Germany, though a great and powerful empire, would yet, if better united under one head, be the dread and envy of Europe. At present the disputes of the different states have tended to weaken the whole, and to subject it to the insults and attacks of foreign powers. I might thus run through the whole list of European kingdoms, and I am sure I should find in the history

history of each of them some argument drawn from its experience in favour of union. Spain was formerly distracted by a number of independent states and principalities within its domain. The union of the kingdoms of Castile and Arragon, by the marriage of Isabel and Ferdinand, removed much of this evil. The consequence of this happy union was the overturning of the kingdom of the Saracens, which had maintained its ground in Spain for a period of 700 years. From this event, the rise of the greatness of the Spanish monarchy may be dated. It is well known to what power it rose under Charles the Fifth. The liberties of Europe were considered in danger. But the union of the States of Flanders during the reigns of his two successors was the means of preserving Europe. The independence of Holland was achieved by the bravery of the Dutch, the wisdom of their burgomasters, and the union of their several provinces in one common cause. The independence of Portugal completed the decline of the Spanish monarchy.

Thus we see that union was the means of raising the Spanish power, and the neglect of continuing that system the cause of its decay. By seizing this neglected principle, the Spanish Netherlands and Holland recovered their liberties, and the balance of power in Europe was once more preserved.

But if we look into the history of the more northern states of Europe, we shall find a case more exactly in point. I allude to the famous constitution of Calmar, in 1397, by which the three kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden were united, and consolidated into one under Margaret, the Semiramis of the North. Had this union continued in force, instead of being dissolved by the jealousies and dissensions of the several members of it, the splendour of the North of Europe would not have so declined. These three kingdoms have been less noticed by philosophers than even their present insignificance will warrant. It is well known that the brave assertors of the liberties of the
world

world issued from these frozen climes, and overturned the gigantic fabric of Roman despotism. Liberty was born the hardy child of the North, and has always proved faithful to and worthy of her origin. All the free governments of Europe may trace their descent from a Gothic root. In their several histories many an important lesson may be read to illustrate the proposition with which I set out, that the Union of the three kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland, cannot be too much recommended. If the union of Calmar had continued in force, instead of dissolving by the banishment of Christian the Second in 1523, those three northern kingdoms would have anticipated our claims to be considered the political arbiters of Europe.

I think it has been sufficiently proved, that the connection between the two countries has been hitherto raw and ill-cemented—That the constitution of 1782, leaving the single tie of a common Executive Power, is not that sort of union
which

which history has often presented cases of between other states. In those cases there were no independent legislative bodies invested with that great power which results from the principles of a British constitution, to fetter and clog the beneficial operation of their union of under one monarch. The prince was generally in those cases invested both with the legislative and executive powers, or with that sort of influence which virtually gave them to him. But the power of the King of Great Britain is not sufficient to oblige the aristocracy of Ireland to bow down the stubborn neck of its pride and ambition to the yoke of moderation and virtue. Neither has their successful resistance been founded on any confidence which the *people* might have in them. I am persuaded that the Parliament does not possess the good opinion and confidence of the people. The discontents of the people are too loud to imagine the contrary. We do not see them obedient to the laws, prosperous in their industry,

or

or indeed possessed of any spirit of industry at all. We cannot say that they are united at home, when we see dissensions in all parts of the kingdom, and an universal spirit of distrust and dissatisfaction. We have seen the authority of the Parliament contested, by a powerful rebellion, almost at the very doors of the Senate House. And though I am one of those who are firmly persuaded that parties are of great advantage to a free state, yet it is not those divisions which prevail in Ireland, it is not such factions as those of the Orange and the United Irishmen, that merit this approbation. Neither do I infer from hence, that where the people are discontented, the government must necessarily be bad. I am not so sanguine an admirer of the popular part of a state as to transfer to it that maxim of the English constitution applicable to the regal, that it '*can do no wrong.*' I will even concede that the people of Ireland have frequently acted most outrageously. But I must insist that in all disputes with them, and their rulers, the presumption is at least upon a par in favour of the people. 'Experience

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rience (to borrow the observation of a zealous champion* of aristocracies) may perhaps justify me in going much farther. Where popular discontents have been very prevalent; it may well be affirmed and supported, that there has been generally something found amiss in the constitution, or in the conduct of government. The people have no interest in disorder:—when they do wrong, it is their error, and not their crime. But with the governing part of a state it is far otherwise. They certainly may act ill by design, as well as by mistake.’ ‘*Les révolutions qui arrivent dans les grands états ne sont point un effet du hazard, ni du caprice des peuples. Rien ne revolte les grands d’un royaume comme un gouvernement foible et derangé. Pour la populace, ce n’est jamais par envie d’attaquer qu’elle se soulève, mais par impatience de souffrir †.*’

Such are the opinions of two great men, who cannot be suspected of any inclination to take the part of the people against their

* Burke, Vol. I. p. 416. 4to. edit. of his Works.

† Mem. de Sully, Vol. I. p. 133.

lawful rulers. The question then is as to the proper remedy, and I assert that this can only be found in a Legislative Union with Great Britain. This will unite the people amongst themselves, will eradicate their feuds, and soften, blend and harmonize the colours of that melancholy picture which Ireland has hitherto presented. It will remove those internal factions which are more destructive than war, famine, pestilence, or any of the evils which offended Heaven inflicts on the human race—That aristocracy which has sprung out of English colonization, but which has long lost all traces of that generosity, humanity and dignity of mind which characterised the nation from which they derive their pedigree, will recover those lost traits of English character. ‘The child will then assimilate to its parent, and reflect with true filial piety the beauteous countenance of British liberty.’ If a common language receives the aid of an equal government, it must unite by degrees the most widely distant characters.

I have often repeated, that there is much energy in the Irish character. There is consequently much matter to work upon. The energies of the moral world equally afford the means of grand improvements and important purposes of utility as those of the material. As natural philosophers direct the active properties of air or water, so will wise statesmen those latent energies which are found in mankind. A prudent legislature will tame their wild nature, subdue them to use, and render them the most powerful and most tractable agents in subservience to great views and great designs. But the legislators of Ireland have hitherto been labouring at the wrong end. They have been satisfied with endeavouring to curb the conduct, instead of attempting to mould the disposition and character. When the influence of civilization was only wanting, they were hanging out the law in all its gloomy terrors. They have not appeared sensible that though human laws may often correct the outward excess, yet they can never form the inward principle—

‘ *Serendi*

'*Serendi sunt* MORES,' was the emphatic expression of Cicero on this subject. Penal statutes may sometimes curb the overt-act, but they cannot reach the heart. It remains therefore to be seen whether the combined legislative wisdom of both kingdoms will not adopt a different line of conduct.

I have taken some pains to collect the sentiments of the people of Ireland, upon the subject of this proposed Union. I am happy to find a great majority in favour of it. The Catholics are decided friends and supporters of the measure, in spite of the remonstrances of a few discontented individuals who assume the voice of the whole Catholic body. I have had many opportunities, since I have been in Ireland, of ascertaining this fact. In travelling through the south east of the country, the spot where the rebellion most raged, I had frequent opportunities of hearing the sentiments of the peasantry of Wicklow and Wexford on the state of affairs. They all profess as much hatred now against those
men

men who instigated them to take up arms, as they formerly did against the Protestant aristocracy of the country. It seems also to be their unanimous opinion, that an Union holds out the prospect of effectual relief to them.

The chief opposition to the measure will be that of the capital. The people of Dublin are generally inimical to it, from motives of interest and pride. Some of them consider that the commercial greatness of the city will be soon eclipsed by Cork and Waterford, which are more advantageously situated for trade, and enjoy better harbours. But the interest of Dublin must give way to that of the kingdom at large. This is supposing that it really will suffer in the event of an Union, which however is by no means a point agreed on by all parties.

As for that opposition which may arise from the pride and vanity of any part of the Irish nation, it would be absurd that it should stand in the way of the measure. Trifling points of honour should not keep

us asunder, but rather in their adjustment conjoin us still more closely together. They should not form obstacles to an Union, but as it were clasps and hinges to it. They should constitute a contignation which will link the two edifices together.

I do confess, my dear friend, that I look forward with peculiar pleasure to this measure, which shall unite the hitherto discordant members of our political greatness; which shall unite all ranks of men, and rally them round the throne. If an army should be under the command of one general; *a fortiori* should two nations under such circumstances as Great Britain and Ireland be under the full command of one entire sovereign authority. Ireland is the right arm of our empire. But now it seems as if the two hands designed by nature for reciprocal assistance and co-operation were continually impeding and baffling each other; as unfortunate as if the two feet should entangle and trip up the natural body. We cannot both prosper under a divided government. It would be equally possible

possible (or rather impossible) for the human body, though composed of different members, whose offices are different, to be *therefore* governed by the influence of more than one mind. We must be firmly interwoven and knit together in a bond of connection, which shall be broad, comprehensive and indissoluble. We shall then possess all that combination, and all that opposition of interests ; all that action and counter action which in the political as well as in the natural world, from the reciprocal struggle of discordant powers, draws out the harmony of the universe.

This master-piece of politics, which was the darling project of the illustrious Lord Chatham, will be carried into execution by his still greater son and successor. He is an able, vigorous, and well informed statesman. If to the salvation of the political existence of Europe, which he promises to effect, any fresh glory can be added, or any fresh laurels be gained, it will result from this measure of an Union. The alliance of the three kingdoms, of England, Scotland and
 7 Ireland,

Ireland, will be then firm, when their pursuits and aversions are invariably directed towards the same objects. We shall be then all equally sheltered under the canopy of a common cause. Our connection will be then close and indissoluble; a consolidation of force, which shall combine us with a degree of cohesion and firmness, before unknown, into one mighty body, informed by one soul. Our reciprocal interests will rest on the firm pillars of Justice, Religion, Council and Treasure. National and local distinctions, prejudices and grievances will be removed; no stings of resentment will be left to rankle in the hearts of a suffering party; all will be melted and blended into one great people, and then at length shall we be able to exclaim with joy and triumph on both sides of the Irish sea—*CUNCTI GENS SUMUS UNA!*

I remain, dear Sir,
Yours, &c. &c.

THE END.

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 sumus una!



I remain, dear Sir,
 Yours, &c. &c.

THE END.

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